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VICO

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VICO

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CONTENTS

VICO.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY—ITALY AND NAPLES

THE name of Vico is unfamiliar to English readers It does not follow that a volume treating of his life, writings, and speculations, must be out of place in a series of "Philosophical Classics." Every great philosopher has not obtained world-wide popularity The sphere of many a very powerful thinker's fame and action is limited by a definite local or linguistic line. Bishop Butler may be selected as an example Few English philosophers have had more influence on British and American thought than the author of 'The Analogy' and of 'The Sermons on Human Nature' But he has had little effect on the intellectual development of France, Germany, or Italy Even in Germany the ignorance displayed regarding him is almost incredible Erdmann in his 'History of Philosophy' makes no reference to him Ueberweg devotes to him three inaccurate lines Dorner

in his 'History of Protestant Theology' merely mentions his name In Herzog's 'Theological Encyclopædia,' and in Noack's 'Philosophical Dictionary,' he has not been honoured even with the briefest article, although the former is largely and the latter wholly biographical The late Dr Tholuck, indeed, made him the subject of an essay, but unfortunately it was depreciatory and worthless It would be an error, however, to infer that because Butler is thus practically unknown, and has been wholly uninfluential, in learned and thoughtful Germany, he cannot really be entitled to the intellectual rank generally assigned him in this country, or that Germany might not have been much the better had she been more acquainted with his teachings and more imbued with his spirit, or that the effect which his writings have produced on the British and American mind is not of itself an amply sufficient reason for studying these writings with interest. In like manner we must not conclude that Vico cannot have been a great thinker, or a very influential thinker, because he is little known in Britain, and few traces of his ideas can be found in the pages of British authors. Such a conclusion is not a fair inference from British ignorance, and it is not true in itself.

All who have studied the writings of Vico have acknowledged the superiority of his genius It is impossible to peruse the 'Scienza Nuova' without feeling one's self in contact with a singularly profound and powerful intelligence His mind was not, indeed, harmoniously developed, it had obvious weaknesses and defects, but it was also rich in rare endowments, capable of altogether special achievements, full of the divine afflatus, formed to conceive and diffuse grand and original

ideas Then, the work which he actually accomplished was of permanent value He earned for himself a distinct place in the history of philosophy, by tracing for the mind new paths into neglected departments of knowledge, and sowing around him many fruitful seeds of truth The more the sciences of history, of society, and of law are cultivated, the more will his reputation grow, owing to the number of original and profound suggestions in his writings as to the subjects with which these sciences are conversant. It was not given to him to reap as well as to sow, but the sower is not to be deprived of the honour which is his due, because he is not also the reaper As the harvest ripens in the fields indicated, the value of Vico's sowing can scarcely fail to become increasingly apparent Further, the influence which he has already exercised has been far from slight In his own age, indeed, he was not appreciated. But in the latter half of the eighteenth century the best spirits of Italy adopted and elaborated various of his leading principles. In the nineteenth century the most renowned of Italian philosophers—Gioberti, Mamiani, and other distinguished men — have rejoiced to enrol themselves under his flag He has been a powerful living force in the great Italian awakening which this age has witnessed. His influence is still growing, notwithstanding the spread of empiricism and absolute idealism in Italy The star of Vico shows no sign of paling before those of Comte and Hegel, it rather appears to derive from them additional brightness And the more his power has come to be felt within Italy, the more has it also spread beyond it. France, in particular, during the last fifty years, has supplied many appreciative students

of his writings. It is enough to mention the names of Michelet, Quinet, Cousin, Jouffroy, Ballanche, Buchez, Renouvier, Franck, De Ferron, and Vacherot

One of the causes which have limited the popularity of Vico has been — it can scarcely be doubted — the thoroughly Italian character of his thinking He was as typically Italian as Bishop Butler was English. His philosophy was, indeed, an isolated thing in the generation to which he belonged, but it was so only because more truly national than anything else in that generation. At a time when Italy was as much subjugated by the ideas as by the arms of her neighbours, he was able to maintain his independence and individuality as a thinker, and by being true to himself he was true to his country, the genius of which found expression through him as through no other of his contemporaries This has contributed to render his renown more peculiarly Italian, and less cosmopolitan, than it would otherwise have been. It really increases, however, in some respects, the significance and value of his work. Nationality in thought as in action is a force as well as a limit, it brings gain as well as loss Vico has gained more than he lost by it He has the same sort of interest and importance for those who wish to understand the character of Italian philosophy, as Descartes has for those who wish to understand the character of French philosophy, or Locke for those who wish to understand English philosophy, or Kant for those who wish to understand German philosophy

The surroundings of Vico were not favourable to the development of genius Italy, during his lifetime, was

passing through a very barren and dreary stage of her history She was moving painfully and aimlessly, under no consistent guidance, with no choice but the choice of evils, she was crushed, dismembered, exhausted The brilliant prospects of her Renaissance had all been prematurely blasted In the centuries which formed the era of transition from medieval to modern times, Italy, despite of many weaknesses, was intellectually in advance of every other nation She was first in all departments of thought and in many departments of action, she abounded more than any other country in scholars, philosophers, artists, and statesmen It was on her hearth that the fire of classical genius was rekindled, and it was the hands of her sons which passed the quickening flame to other lands Already in the fourteenth century she had her Dante and Petrarch in poetry, and her Boccaccio in prose It was the Genoese Columbus who in the fifteenth century discovered America. In a period of about sixty years, partly within the fifteenth and partly within the sixteenth century, this one country contained a crowd of eminent painters, many of whom, as Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, Michael-Angelo, Fra Bartolomeo, Titian, Correggio, have never been equalled before or since. Italian thinkers—Telesio and Giordano Bruno, Cardan and Galileo—inaugurated the philosophical revolution effected by Bacon and Descartes. An Italian, Niccolo Machiavelli, was the first great modern political historian

But the glory soon began to fade away The revival of learning, of art, and of science in Italy, came unaccompanied by moral earnestness and religious conviction. Where externally fair it was often internally foul, it

was consequently devoid of the seed and sap of an enduring and fruitful life. A civilisation rooted mainly in contempt for ignorance and in appreciation of intellectual freedom and of æsthetic refinement, but almost wholly cut off from reverence for the divine, devotion to duty, and love of country, however it may be laden with promise in spring, will produce little save disappointment in autumn Such a civilisation was to be seen in the Italian Renaissance. The marvellous display of intellectual force which characterised it was almost equalled by the infidelity, selfishness, and depravity which it revealed in the ruling and literary classes; the result was that instead of progress there was rapid deterioration. The rivalry of the petty states into which the country was divided—the feuds of the factions in each district and city—the mischievous careers of tyrants, statesmen, and conspirators, animated chiefly by cupidity, envy, revenge, and other evil passions—the ambitions and intrigues of the Court of Rome—the comparative unity of the neighbouring nations, and their consequent military superiority,—led to the loss of liberty and of everything which gives dignity and happiness to a people's life. By the time of Vico, Italy had sunk into a condition of deep degradation. France, England, Spain, the Netherlands, and the Empire were far ahead of her Commerce had almost deserted her shores, her agriculture and industry languished, her princes had ceased to encourage even painting and architecture Poetry had become mainly a mechanical art. Scholars were afraid to cultivate studies which might lead them to conclusions of which the priests or the magistrates might disapprove, and hence occupied themselves chiefly

with safe subjects, like mathematics and archæology There was no freedom of thought in matters of religion, there was no public spirit in matters of policy, the Jesuit was in the schools, foreign soldiers were in the citadels

Independent philosophical speculation was almost extinct in Italy during the greater part of the seventeenth century Physical science, indeed, fortunately still afforded to some extent a sphere for the exercise of intellect. Galileo might be compelled to recant his discoveries, but mathematical and experimental investigation could not be arrested Castelli, Cavalieri, Torricelli, and others, who were proud to regard themselves as disciples of Galileo, did honour to their country But in philosophy Italy ceased to guide other nations, or even to think for herself As a natural consequence of native speculation being denied the freedom which is indispensable to a vigorous vitality, foreign speculation gained ascendancy Where independence and originality of thought are treated as crimes, imitation and appropriation become the only intellectual virtues attainable, except by men of rare and peculiar genius Vico lived just at the time when the Cartesian philosophy was spreading through the peninsula, and not long before sensationalism began to make its power widely felt He was strongly opposed to Cartesianism, he would have been still more strongly opposed to sensationalism So long as either Cartesianism or sensationalism prevailed, his doctrines could not be impartially appreciated While what was new in the philosophical thought of Italy during the age of Vico was chiefly foreign, and indeed chiefly French, what was old was

largely antiquated. A feeble continuation of the Renaissance could still be traced, but the reaction towards medievalism was much more powerful, and had made an effete scholasticism as dominant as its own deadness allowed it to be. Ingenuous young men aspiring to study philosophy were subjected to courses of instruction calculated only, as a rule, to extinguish enthusiasm and to destroy insight, to bring philosophy into contempt, and to stupefy and pervert the mind. The most artificial and perplexing, arid and repulsive treatises were put into their hands as primers and text-books

Nearly the whole of Vico's life was spent in Naples That city—so celebrated for the beauty of its situation —has had a long and agitated history, under Greeks, Oscans, Romans, Goths, Byzantines, Normans, Germans, Spaniards, Austrians, Bourbons, and Italians "The kingdom of Naples," says P Villari, "resembles a perpetually stormy sea, which becomes monotonous by the changeless uniformity of its motion." During the first thirty-two years of Vico's life, Charles II. of Spain was its sovereign. He ruled it, as his predecessors from the time of Ferdinand the Catholic had done, through viceroys Most of these showed little wish to govern well, and the best of them, however much they wished to do so, could not govern well, because they were forced to govern in what were supposed to be the interests of Spain.[1] The death of Charles II. in 1700 led to the War of Succession in Europe, and for

[1] Ample information as to the condition of Naples under the governors appointed by Charles II. of Spain will be found in the last two books of Giannone's 'Istoria Civile del Regno di Napoli.' This work was translated into English by Captain James Ogilvie Lond. 1729-31. 2 vols.

thirteen years Naples was the scene of almost incessant strife, conspiracy, and misrule.[1] Down to 1734 it was under Austrian viceroys, who were only able to retain their armed grasp of it with difficulty. From this date during all the later years of Vico's life it was under the sway of Charles III. of Bourbon, who proved a wise and honourable ruler.[2] The events which took place around our philosopher affected, of course, in some degree his fortunes as a private individual. He took no part, however, in public affairs. He exerted neither by speech nor action any political influence. His life was wholly the life of a scholar and thinker. Notwithstanding this, a few remarks regarding the condition of Naples in his time seem to be necessary. No life can be understood altogether apart from the environment in which it is developed. No human life is uninfluenced and unmodified by its social surroundings.

The general condition of Naples, then, during the period of Vico's intellectual growth and activity—the period from 1668 to 1734—may perhaps be characterised as follows without much inaccuracy or injustice:—

The supreme rulers of the kingdom were foreign sovereigns, who dealt with it as a conquered land, and whose wills could set aside any law. Their resident

[1] One incident of the deplorable period which immediately followed the close of the dominion of the House of Spanish Austria—the so-called conspiracy of Macchia—has been described at length by Vico himself in his 'De Parthenopea Conjuratione.' See Opere, vol. i. pp. 317-378.

[2] His reign is described in the first book of Colletta's 'Storia del Reame di Napoli.' Colletta's work has been translated into English by S. Horner. Edinburgh, 1858. 2 vols.

representatives, the viceroys, might equally contravene law so long as they satisfied their masters The supreme council, which assisted the king, and the collateral council, which assisted the viceroy, certainly did not aim primarily at the good of the governed Kings, viceroys, and their councillors, however, introduced not a few reforms, and performed many munificent acts Their love of popularity counteracted to a considerable extent some of their worst temptations It prompted them to patronise art and literature, but unfortunately in ways which tended to debase both, and especially the latter Any popular institutions which existed possessed little influence The common people were able to act on the Government only by tumults and insurrections, which were frequent, the Neapolitans being highly susceptible and impulsive These abrupt, violent, emotional eruptions seldom, if ever, left any satisfactory results behind them. The whole civil administration was corrupt, and the financial administration was fraudulent in the extreme Taxation was scandalously unjust, owing to the exemptions of privileged classes and persons, and, at the same time, insanely rapacious Commerce was so fettered as to be insignificant, agriculture was so burdened that naturally luxuriant districts had almost become deserts The peasants were few and wretched, bandits were so numerous as to be formidable to the nobles in their castles, and to the citizens in walled towns, the thieves in the city of Naples alone were reckoned in the judicial census of 1735 at 30,000, the beggars were, of course, much more numerous There was no native militia, Neapolitans being forced into foreign service, while their own country was oppressed

[illegible] still retained [illegible] them always [illegible] their [illegible] in opposition to the [illegible] of the common population. At the same time, [illegible] cultured, gener[illegible] students themselves, and the [illegible] friends of the learned.

There was a great want of justice in the land. It was difficult to obtain right decisions from the tribunals, and still more difficult to get such decisions carried into practice. But laws and lawyers were very numerous. There were no less than eleven systems of legislation simultaneously in force within the kingdom, and the city swarmed with *avvocati*. Scarcely any restrictions were placed on entrance to the legal profession, although it was, perhaps, the only secular profession which could lead to affluence and power. The great majority of its members in Naples during the lifetime of Vico were, unless they have been much calumniated, of a very mean type of character. It had also, however, not a few worthy representatives,—men imbued with a genuine love of learning and culture. The study of law, in fact,

was cultivated in Naples, throughout the period under consideration, with remarkable activity and intelligence Francis d'Andrea exerted a great and beneficial influence through his personal example, and Aulisio, Mariano, Gravina, and others, produced juridical works which are still regarded as valuable Probably in no other city were more treatises on legal subjects published during the last two decades of the seventeenth and the first three decades of the eighteenth century than in Naples Vico's entire philosophy arose from a study of law It must not be forgotten that he was only one among many in Naples whose minds were energetically engaged in that study

The power of the Church was great, and its wealth enormous The number of ecclesiastics in the kingdom was about 100,000, and in the city about 16,000 The Pope was incessantly interfering with the administration of affairs The clergy, as a body, were not held in high respect, but they had a strong hold on the people through their superstitions Education was completely under the control of the Church, and largely under the control of the Jesuits Philosophy was, consequently, only taught in its scholastic forms, and from books which had received ecclesiastical approbation. A philosophy which assumed an anti-religious or anti-churchly attitude would not have been tolerated. The persecution of the historian Giannone is an instance of how the critics of clerical pretensions were treated

The general character of the Neapolitan people was fixed long before the time of Vico. In poems, tales, and histories of the fifteenth century its features are already clearly visible It is a character as full of contrasts as

Neapolitan scenery, as changeful as has been Neapolitan history. It naturally displayed itself in abrupt transitions, violent alternations, and a multiplicity of most dissimilar aspects and expressions It can hardly be described at all, and certainly cannot be drawn in a few lines Rarely have contrary qualities and conflicting passions been so closely combined in the genius of a people Hence the famous men of Naples have been of strikingly diverse natures, a family likeness or common features being scarcely traceable, owing to the prominence of the individual differences

Naples has never reached in any art, except that of operatic music, the eminence attained by various of the modern towns of Italy It has had no great school of painting like Rome, Florence, Venice, Bologna, Parma, Modena It has had, however, a number of celebrated painters, some of the best of whom belonged to the decadence period of the art Thus Luca Giordano and Francesco Solimena were fellow-townsmen and contemporaries of Vico The unlikeness of their works to those of their predecessors, Ribera and Salvator Rosa, may illustrate the statement that the genius of Naples was favourable to originality, or at least to individuality

Literature has flourished in Naples in a series of outbursts The earliest flush was in the time of Frederick II A second and still more vigorous one was that under Alphonso of Arragon and his son, the patrons of Lorenzo Valla, Beccadelli, Pontano, Sannazaro, and other scholars Vico lived in the midst of what may perhaps be reckoned as a third season It was one of much literary activity, although not of remarkable

literary freshness or high literary excellence. The common conception of Vico as a solitary plant growing out of a dry soil is altogether erroneous As compared with the two generations which preceded it, that of Vico was the subject of a notable literary and scientific revival. Poets were, if not very eminent, certainly very numerous and very enthusiastic History had its Giannone, historical philosophy its Vico, political philosophy its Gravina and Doria. Law, as has been already mentioned, was zealously studied by many superior men. Physical research was pursued with success by Borelli, Cornelio, Cirillo, &c Several "academies" honourably known in the history of learning and science were prosperous and active.

Naples is a city which has considerable interest for the student of the history of philosophy Thomas Aquinas and Giordano Bruno were born in its neighbourhood. In Naples Tilesio published his celebrated exposition of his system—'De rerum naturâ juxtà propria principia' (1586), here he orally propagated his views and combated the current Aristotelianism, until he had to withdraw to his native Cosenza to escape the persecution of the monks, here he founded the *Academia Cosentina* or *Telesiana*, which, with the still older Academia Secretorum Naturæ, did much to evoke and sustain the love of mathematical and physical research In Naples Campanella taught with passionate ardour, and suffered long imprisonment Naples was the centre of Cartesian propagandism in Italy. Within its walls Vico spent all except eight years of his life In the time which has since elapsed, philosophy has never long failed to find in Naples true disciples In the

latter half of the eighteenth century Genovesi, Filangieri, Pagano, and a considerable band of kindred spirits, fostered among their fellow-citizens alike the love of wisdom and zeal for the promotion of human welfare. In the earlier part of the present century Naples could boast in Galuppi the possession of the most illustrious Italian philosopher of his time. And in our own day Spaventà and Vera, with their numerous friends and pupils—the ardent propagators of Hegelian doctrines in contemporary Italy—have not only worthily maintained but greatly increased its philosophical fame

CHAPTER II

EARLY LIFE (1668-1694)—VICO AS STUDENT.

It is in itself an instructive and characteristic fact that Vico should have written an account of his own life with a view to show how his system of beliefs had been gradually evolved and elaborated It illustrates how thoroughly the great idea of historical development had taken possession of him. He regarded the description which Descartes gave of his studies in the 'Discourse on Method' as so unnatural and incredible, that he did not hesitate to pronounce it a fiction adroitly insinuated to exalt its author at the expense of his predecessors; and he undertook, for his own part, to trace in a truly historical way how a mind had been formed and educated. The 'Vita di Giambattista Vico scritta da sè medesimo' is his own introduction to his own works, and it is an indispensable introduction to them. As regards general design, it is very similar to the Autobiography of J S Mill, and consequently it holds much the same relation to the other works of Vico as the Autobiography to those of Mill, although it would be difficult to find two minds or two educations more unlike than those of Vico and Mill. It is the

chief source of our knowledge of Vico's life, but it can be considerably supplemented from his correspondence The materials of the following biographical sketch are drawn, of course, from these the original sources of information It is brief and general, because it will still be necessary in subsequent chapters, when treating of Vico's works, to refer to his life. His works were in a rare degree the outcome of his life, and they can only be understood when viewed as springing from it [1]

Vico was born in Naples on the 23d of June 1668 He was the child of Antonio Vico and Candida Masullo, and apparently their only child, as in his Autobiography he makes no mention of brothers or sisters He was baptised in a church dedicated to St Januarius,—"la chiesa di S Gennaro, all' Olmo,"—and received the name, very common in Naples, of John Baptist (Giovanni Battista, Giambattista) His father kept a small bookshop opposite the Monte della Pietà, or public loan-establishment, and probably the occupation of the father helped to give to the life of the son the direction which it took While his father was of a cheerful and lively disposi-

[1] The references in the following pages to Vico's writings are always, when not otherwise stated, to Ferrari's second edition of the 'Opere di Giambattista Vico ordinate ed illustrate coll' analisi storica della mente di Vico in relazione alla scienza della civiltà.' 6 vol Milano, 1852-54 The "Vita" is contained in vol iv (pp 326-416) Villarosa's supplementary information is appended (pp 417-424) Vico's correspondence is to be found in vol vi Prof G de Steffano has also edited Vico's 'Opere complete illustrate e tradotte da Pomodoro' 8 vols., 1858-69 This edition I have nowhere seen noticed, and it may be regarded as non-existent out of Italy I have only consulted it in order to read the Sinopsi al Diritto, which Ferrari was unable to discover The eighth volume consists of the Discourse of Galasso and the Five Orations of Vico edited by him, of which an account is given in chap x

tion, his mother had a strong tendency to melancholy, and he believed that he could detect in himself the operation of the temperaments of both parents. In early childhood he displayed restless quickness of intellect and intense love of knowledge. A fall from a stair in his seventh year so seriously fractured his skull that the physician declared he would either die or become an idiot It interrupted the course of his education for three years. He ascribed to it also a considerable change on his mental character, rendering him more inclined to melancholy, self-analysis, and reflection.

He returned to school in his tenth year with powers of study quite unimpaired by his accident. It was soon found that in the private institution to which he was sent no other pupil could keep pace with him, and accordingly he was transferred to a secondary school, which was under the direction of the Jesuits Here also he remained only a short time, partly because of what he regarded as an act of injustice in his teachers, and partly because they proceeded so slowly with their instructions For a time he studied without aid, but with intense ardour, often sitting over his book the whole night Very properly his mother tried to check this excess of zeal, but otherwise he seems to have been left by his parents to pursue his own course. His private study of logic led him to attend the lectures of a Jesuit teacher, Antonio del Balzo, whom he describes as a nominalist At the same time he read the 'Summulæ' of Petrus Hispanus and of Paulus Venetus. Works more fitted by their perverse subtilty, their artificiality, their errors and absurdities, to perplex and discourage an ingenuous and aspiring youthful mind,

could hardly have been selected out of the productions of scholasticism [1] Vico's strenuous attempt to master them was unsuccessful, and, baffled and dispirited, he abandoned study for about eighteen months Then his true self came back to him again The famous Academy *degli Infuriati*, after having for a considerable time ceased to meet, was resuscitated, and there was a public celebration in honour of the event Young Vico was present, and the effect on him, to use his own simile, was like what the sound of a trumpet might be expected to have on a spirited steed, which, after having been got ready for the battle, had been let loose to pasture in the fields He returned to the study of philosophy with greater zeal than ever, choosing for teacher Father Ricci, a Jesuit, and a disciple of Duns Scotus. Ricci he praises as a man of very acute intellect, and Duns Scotus he strangely credits with being the scholastic whose philosophy was most akin to that of Plato He especially notes that the teaching of Ricci helped him to recognise the truth and importance of Zenö's doctrine of indivisible points—a doctrine which had been altogether misunderstood by Aristotle. This statement shows that Vico not only fell into the error, prevalent among his contemporaries, of supposing that the founder of Stoicism had taught that the *materia prima* was composed of mathematical points, but actually confounded Zeno of Citium with Zeno of Elea, and could not even have read what Aristotle had written concerning the latter One is sorry to have to record such amazing blunders.

[1] Regarding the writings of Petrus Hispanus and Paulus Venetus on logic, see Prantl's 'Geschichte der Logik,' vol iii. pp 33-74, and vol iv pp 118-140

It was not long before Vico thought he might profitably dispense with Ricci's prelections, and accordingly he again betook himself to solitary study The 'Metaphysical Disputations' of Suarez having been recommended to him, he found them extremely interesting, owing to what he regarded as their merits of style, and for a whole year he made the study of them his chief business He must thereby have greatly increased his knowledge of the scholastic system of philosophy, but, so far as I can perceive, no traces of the distinctive doctrines of Suarez are to be found in his writings He not only never appeals to the great Jesuit metaphysician as an authority, but never even refers to his opinions

Fortunately our young philosopher's eager, ardent mind had its attention drawn away for a time from metaphysics A casual visit to a class in the university awakened his interest in the science of law He attended for a short time the lectures of a Professor Verde, but finding in them no help to an understanding of the principles of law, he speedily shut himself up, as was his wont, to solitary reading and meditation, with the Commentary of Vulteius on the 'Institutes' and the 'Institutiones Canonicæ' of Canisius as his text-books He was never long satisfied with any teacher, and although he had many teachers, was almost self-taught The study of law for a man who brings to it, as Vico did, a large mind and the right spirit, is one of the grandest possible Jurisprudence is in intimate connection with theology, ethics, politics, history, and philology It receives light from, and sheds light on, all general philosophy, and almost every special science The knowledge of Roman law implies a knowledge of the

language, the literature, the history, the genius and ideas of the Roman people, and to know the Roman people well is to have possession of the chief key to the understanding of the civil and political history of humanity Vico would never have accomplished the work he did had he not acquired a profound and comprehensive acquaintance with Roman law

Having mastered the institutes of civil and ecclesiastical law, he wished to practise at the bar An opportunity presented itself, as it so happened that an action was brought against his father Although he had not gone through the regular curriculum of legal study, and was only sixteen years of age, he was allowed to plead in his father's defence, and did so successfully He reports the incident with a self-complacency which is very natural, but we cannot fairly infer from it that he had any special aptitude for the bar No particulars are given us as to the process in which his father was involved, he had the assistance of an experienced advocate, F del Vecchio, and it does not appear that he was ever intrusted with another case. He acknowledges that he looked forward to legal practice with the reverse of pleasure He had a feeble constitution and delicate health, his imagination was luxuriating in the kind of poetry which was popular at the time, the metaphysical character of his mind made the minutiæ of statutes and cases distasteful to him, and the noise and excitement of the courts were abhorrent to his reserved and melancholy disposition. At this stage, however, fortune proved singularly kind to him A casual meeting in a library with the Bishop of Ischia, G B Rocca, followed by a conversation on the methods of teaching juris-

prudence, led to his being asked to give instruction in the science to the bishop's nephews, the sons of Don Domenico Rocca, Marquis of Vatolla The offer was wisely accepted, and Vico spent the next nine years in quiet and studious retirement at the castle of Vatolla

These nine years may safely be affirmed to have been the happiest of his life. He was treated by Don Domenico Rocca with paternal kindness The castle of Vatolla was situated in a healthy and pleasant district of Cilentum above was a bright unclouded sky, around were woods fair to the eye and favourable to meditation, and within were peace and comfort, an extensive library, and ample leisure for study In such a retreat the mind of Vico could hardly fail to develop itself vigorously, and in accordance with its own true genius There was nothing to prevent natural growth or to stimulate to hasty and immature production. Everything was favourable to originality and genuine self-culture

Vico faithfully improved the precious nine years (1685-1694) of his stay at Vatolla. He read leisurely all the best authors of classical antiquity and of Italy, and extended and deepened his knowledge of ancient philosophy, ancient history, ethics, jurisprudence, and poetry He perused alternately a Latin and an Italian classic—Cicero, for example, being followed by Boccaccio, Virgil by Dante, and Horace by Petrarch. He went thrice through the works which interested him most—the first time striving to comprehend them as a whole, the second to follow closely the sequence of ideas and of arguments, and the third to impress on his mind particular passages nobly conceived or admir-

ably expressed One general conclusion to which he was thus led was a conviction that the Latin language was essentially superior to the Italian, and that the contemporary vernacular poetry by which he had been hitherto so greatly charmed was of a degenerate and meretricious kind

He devoted much of his attention to tracing religious and civil institutions to their sources He combined the study of history with that of language In connection with canon law he applied himself to theology, and especially sought to understand the controversy on the relation of grace to free-will, taking as a guide the celebrated work 'De heresi Janseniana,' written by the Jesuit divine, Stephen de Champs, under the pseudonym of Antonius Ricardus In connection with Roman law he examined the ethical writings of Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero, and marked how jurisprudence was the application of moral principles The ethics both of the Epicureans and Stoics seemed to him manifestly most defective—*una morale di solitarii*, aiming merely to regulate the conduct of the individual, and ignoring the fact that the collective life of mankind is subject to a comprehensive and immutable law.

The chief systems of general philosophy were also passed by him in review. Platonism he contemplated with admiration as proceeding from the sublime and primary truth that the universe and its contents are the emanations of a supreme metaphysical principle, an eternal formative idea. Aristotelianism he judged unfavourably, on the ground that it taught that the Creator and the creature differed in substance, and that things had been formed by the Divine Being out of a physical

basis, as vessels of various kinds are fashioned by a potter out of clay. His Platonism, it must however be remembered, was not that of Plato but of Marsilio Ficino, and his Aristotelianism not that of Aristotle but of Suarez. Epicureanism, which had been resuscitated by Gassendi, he studied in the poem of Lucretius, and came to the conclusion that while its physics had some good features, its metaphysical assumptions, its explanations of mental processes, and its moral doctrine were despicable. He also began a critical examination of Cartesianism, seeking initiation through the 'Fundamenta Physicæ' of Regius [1] From the first the Cartesian system seemed to him a seriously erroneous and dangerous one

Although Vico expended a considerable amount of thought on the physics of the Pythagoreans and Plato, Aristotle and Epicurus, Descartes and others, he seems to have made no attempt to study physical science properly understood. The physics which was not largely mixed with metaphysics had no attractions for him. He lets us know that he had heard of the experimental physics of Robert Boyle, but he adds that, "although he thought it might have useful applications to medicine, he had taken care not to occupy himself with a science which could contribute nothing to the philosophy of man, and the language of which was so barbarous" For mathematics he had no aptitude He got the length of

[1] He erroneously supposed this work to have been written by Descartes himself, although Descartes, soon after its publication, had formally disavowed it, as "copying his views badly, changing their order, and denying certain metaphysical truths on which all physics ought to be based." See preface to the 'Principles of Philosophy'

the *pons asinorum* in Euclid, and looked at it, but did not find that he could make his way across He ascribes the failure to his "invincible disposition to refer geometrical facts to metaphysical genera or general laws, instead of studying them in their individuality" At the same time, not unnaturally perhaps, although far from justly, he passes a very unfavourable judgment on mathematics as a mental discipline It suits, he maintains, only small minds, and the algebraic department of it is naturally injurious to almost every intellectual faculty Geometry he allows to be appropriate instruction for children, on the ground that it is a kind of delineation, —*che in un certo modo è una pittura*

From Vatolla he returned to Naples which he never again quitted.

CHAPTER III

LATER LIFE (1694-1744)—VICO AS TEACHER AND AUTHOR

VICO found that, during his absence from Naples, there had passed over it a change which he could only deplore He has himself specified the following as its leading features Literary taste had greatly declined. The Greek and Latin classics were falling into neglect, people were becoming content to read them only in translations, and even writers of the highest reputation no longer sought to inspire themselves with their spirit and to rival their excellences The vernacular poets were following in the footsteps, not of Dante or Petrarch, but of Della Casa The philosophy, at once so sublime and so practical, which Ficino, Pico della Mirandola, the Piccolomini, Patrizi, and many others, had taught during the sixteenth century, thereby resuscitating, as it were, Greece in the midst of Italy, was now relegated to the obscurity of some cloisters Cartesianism had decidedly gained the ascendancy Consequently, the study of languages and of history, literary elaboration, and learned research were despised, mathematics and physics were the only popular sciences, instruction in

Euclid had been substituted for the teaching of logic, and short routes to knowledge, easy methods, manuals, and abridgments were in excessive request One explanation of physical nature had so often given place to another, that the theory and practice of medicine had become infected with scepticism The neglect of philology had led to neglect of the ancient interpreters of the civil law, and no one seemed even to conceive that jurisprudence could be dealt with philosophically Thus did Vico describe his own intellectual environment He was completely out of harmony with it. He felt isolated in his generation, a stranger in his own birthplace While in profound sympathy with the spirit of classical antiquity and of the Renaissance, he was deeply dissatisfied with the tendencies of thought and feeling in active operation around him His mind had to seek its home, not in the present, but in the past and future In the body he lived in Naples, in the spirit he dwelt in ancient Greece and Rome, and in the ideal city of humanity

It was, however, in the uncongenial medium of the actual Naples of his time that he had to gain his sustenance and perform his work And unfortunately the mere problem of existence was for him a difficult one His scholarship and literary faculty composed his entire capital, the pen was the only instrument of labour he could use, of skill in practical affairs or power to push himself into advantageous positions he had little; none of his merits were of the kind which command worldly success, and the very originality which later generations have so greatly admired was positively unfavourable to his advancement in his own. The years

of his manhood and old age were spent in a long struggle with poverty and misfortune. He was only able at times to obtain a scanty livelihood by writing at command nuptial odes, funeral elegies, inscriptions for tombs and churches, orations for public occasions, eulogies of great personages, &c , and he was sometimes sorely tempted to abandon altogether even for such frivolous and degrading work the search after a science of humanity in which no one seemed to take the slightest interest The condition of literary men now is everywhere very different from what it then was in Naples Many of them, it is true, still require to earn their daily bread by writing what will please a capitalist, or a political party, or an ecclesiastical sect, and their lot is, of course, among the least enviable in any respect, and morally most dangerous, which can fall to human beings A man like Vico, however, would certainly in the present day have had a choice between the literary work in which he could be free and that in which he could not, whereas in his own day the only choice for him was between servile literary work and starvation.

Two poems—the one dedicated to the Marquis of Vatolla, and the other to the Prince of Feroleto—were the first writings which he published. They were printed at Venice in 1693, and were followed by three *canzoni* in praise of Maximilian Emanuel, Duke of Bavaria, which were printed at Naples in 1694. Poems of a similar character, addressed to great personages, and laden with adulations, appeared from his pen at varying intervals during the rest of his life They were almost all obviously written mainly with a view to a

honorarium, and cannot be read without sorrow that a man of the genius of Vico should have been under the humiliating necessity of belauding and flattering his more fortunate fellow-mortals His earliest extant prose compositions are the two Latin orations,—'Pro auspicatissimo in Hispaniam reditu Francisci Benavidii in Regno Neapolitano pro rege' (1696), and 'In funere Catharinæ Aragoniæ' (1697) For work of this kind he was henceforth frequently called upon, being universally acknowledged to be an accomplished Latin rhetorician He was rather proud of his Latin prose, and about this time he decided on abandoning the further study both of Greek and Italian, in order to be able to devote himself more thoroughly to the mastery of Latin, having come to the conclusion that those who cultivate several languages will never speak or write any one of them with purity and elegance. But for this unwise resolution his Latin would probably have been almost as good as it is, while the Italian of the 'Scienza Nuova' might have been far better than it is.

After having failed to obtain a town-clerkship, our philosopher was in 1697 appointed Professor of Rhetoric in the university of Naples The salary of the office was merely one hundred *scudi* (crowns), yet on so small a fixed income as this he ventured to marry two years later a Neapolitan maiden called Teresa Destito, of whom we know only that she was the daughter of Peter Destito, a notary, and of his wife Antonia dello Giudice, was nineteen years of age at the date of her marriage, could not sign her name to the nuptial contract, had no portion, and became the mother of

several children. At the opening of the university in the years 1699, 1700, 1701, 1704, 1705, 1707, and 1708, he delivered introductory lectures which all had reference to one great theme,—knowledge, its advantages, its ends, and the order and method of acquiring it. The discourse of 1708 he published under the title 'De nostri temporis studiorum ratione', of the others there is a brief account in his Autobiography, and they have recently been discovered and printed The philosophy of Vico appears in these lectures at an early stage in the process of its formation and in its most rudimentary known condition. Ideas which continually recur in his subsequent writings, and which are to be found in their mature form in the 'Scienza Nuova,' may here be examined in the germ. Although these lectures, however, throw very considerable light on their author's intellectual aims, and on the principles which determined the whole course of his speculations, they need not be dwelt on at present, as they have afterwards to be discussed.

After the failure of the formidable conspiracy planned in the interest of Austria by the Prince of Macchia and other Neapolitan nobles, Vico wrote a history of the movement in which the conduct of its leaders was exhibited in a strongly unfavourable light, but when in 1708 Austria had triumphed, and he was commissioned by Count Daun, the Austrian viceroy, to compose epitaphs glorifying as martyrs and heroes Joseph Capece and Charles di Sangro, two of the very men whom he had in his 'De Parthenopea Conjuratione' described as rebels and traitors, he obeyed without question or complaint

In the 'De ratione studiorum' the influence of Lord Bacon's 'De augmentis scientiarum' is very apparent At the date of writing it he had been for some time acquainted with Bacon's writings, and had conceived for them high admiration. Their author he pronounces "an incomparable man." Bacon as powerfully attracted as Descartes repelled him. His next philosophical work, which was published in 1710, and entitled 'On the Primitive Wisdom of the Italians' ('De antiquissima Italorum sapientia'), was suggested partly by the 'Cratylus' of Plato and partly by the 'Wisdom of the Ancients' ('De sapientia veterum) of Bacon, although he regarded the latter as one of the least satisfactory of the great English philosopher's productions Its design was to elicit and exhibit through the analysis of Latin words the principles of a system of metaphysical truth supposed to embody the wisdom of Ionic and Etruscan sages. It certainly cannot be deemed a successful attempt, although not without scattered luminous thoughts. As a further account of it will be given hereafter, it may suffice at present simply to quote Dr Botta's brief statement of its fundamental doctrine. "Knowledge consists essentially in a relation of causality between the knowing principle and the knowable, since the mind can only know that which it can produce through its own activity,—that is to say, the mind can only know those data of experience which it can convert into truth by a process of reason. This conversion, in which, according to Vico, lies the principle of all science, neither the psychological method, nor the geometrical process introduced by Descartes, can effect; it can only be produced by a method in

which certainty and truth, authority and reason, philology and philosophy, become united and harmonised, so as to embrace the necessary principles of nature as well as the contingent productions of human activity. To establish a fact which may be converted into truth, to find a principle which has its basis in experience and common-sense, yet is in harmony with the eternal order of the universe, is the problem of metaphysics. This fact or this principle, according to Vico, is to be found in God alone, the only true 'Ens,' who, being an infinite cause, contains in Himself all facts and all intelligence."[1] The above-mentioned treatise was very shortly after its appearance criticised with considerable acuteness in a periodical published at Venice, the 'Giornale dei Letterati d'Italia.' Vico replied; the critic maintained the accuracy of his charges; and an answer to what was said in their defence was returned. These pieces, as the controversy turned on cardinal points, are an important appendix to the work.

Its author was next occupied in the composition of a panegyrical life of Antony Caraffa, a Neapolitan of noble birth, who, having entered the service of Austria, had acquired great reputation both as a soldier and a statesman, but who had also shown himself to be an unscrupulous and cruel man, and had, in particular, by the massacres continued through nine long months, and known in the annals of Hungary as the Butcheries of Eperies, doomed his own memory to an immortality of dishonour. Vico was hired to write this man's life by Adrian Caraffa, the marshal's nephew, and he devoted his nights for two years to the task. The labour was

[1] Ueberweg's 'History of Philosophy' (Engl. tr.), vol. ii. p. 474.

ignoble, but it gained the poor philosopher a thousand ducats, and secured a home for one of his daughters' Besides, although the 'De rebus gestis A Caraphæi' has no claim to be considered impartial, it bears no traces of positive falsification, is orderly in arrangement, perspicuous in style, rich in contents, and drawn from original sources It gained Vico the friendship of Gravina. Pope Clement XI, an excellent judge of literary merit, pronounced it "an immortal history."

In the preparation of his biography of Caraffa, Vico found it necessary to read the treatise of Grotius 'On the Law of War and Peace.' This led him to the discovery of what he had been long seeking It was the occasion of giving unity and system to all the chief thoughts of his life. Hitherto he had adopted as his masters only Plato, Tacitus, and Bacon Plato, because he taught what man is in his eternal essence. Tacitus, because he showed men under the conditions of experience; and Bacon, because he had the sense of the unity of the sciences, criticised justly the faults committed by thinkers in the past, indicated happily the tasks to be accomplished by them in the future, and combined theory with practice. To these he now added Grotius, as having brought universal law, philosophy, and theology into a harmonious system founded on the study of history and of language, and as having thereby suggested a synthesis still more comprehensive. In his admiration for Grotius he undertook to write notes to a new edition of his treatise, but after he had made considerable progress in the accomplishment of the task, he reflected that it was not becoming in a Catholic to

enrich the work of a heretic, and so he withdrew from his engagement

He gave the earliest indications of the new enlargement of his thoughts in a discourse delivered at the public opening of the university in 1719, and the earliest distinct and elaborate statement of its results in the works on the unity and constancy of jurisprudence,—'De uno universi juris principio et fine uno' (1720) and 'Liber alter qui est de constantia jurisprudentis' (1721)—which would of themselves have entitled him to be ranked among the greatest of the philosophical jurists of Italy Never before had the philosophy of law been so comprehensively and closely connected with general philosophy, theology, and the doctrines of human nature, morals, and society Never before had the historical method, as distinct from mere historical erudition, been applied to the study of law, certainly never before with a critical freedom and scientific insight comparable to what were here displayed. Vico's celebrated theory as to the origin of the Homeric poems was first propounded in the form of supplementary notes to these essays in 1722

The chair of jurisprudence, to which was attached a salary of 600 ducats, became vacant soon after The great ability of the publications already mentioned, their author's long standing in the university, and the way in which he had discharged the duties of his office, justified his expectation of the appointment, but his merits and claims were overlooked, and an insignificant man, of whom nothing is now known, was preferred to him. This disappointment was keenly felt but bravely borne Vico laboured none the less zealously than

before, and in 1725 he published the first edition of the work on which his fame must always mainly rest,—'Principj di una Scienza Nuova d'intorno alla commune natura delle nazioni' The title is an admirable one,—bold but not over-bold, perspicuous and precise As a philosophy of law, however broadly conceived, the thought of Vico could not do itself justice Law was a mere phase of its appropriate and adequate object, which was no other than the common nature of nations, in which all knowledge, science, art, religion, morality, political and juridical systems, are originated and developed This object Vico's mind had now firmly and fully grasped Now his whole heart might cry Eureka Now he was confident that posterity would do him that justice which his contemporaries refused "Since I completed my great work," were his words in 1726, "I feel that I have become a new man. I am no longer tempted to declaim against the bad taste of the age, because in denying me the place which I sought, it has given me time to compose my 'Scienza Nuova' Shall I say it? I perhaps deceive myself, although most unwilling to do so, the composition of that work has animated me with a heroic spirit, which places me above the fear of death and the calumnies of my rivals I feel that I am seated upon a rock of adamant, when I think of that law of God which does justice to genius by the esteem of the wise"

The rest of Vico's life, so long as he was able to labour, was in great part devoted to the further elaboration of his *magnum opus*, the noblest product of his mind A second edition, greatly altered in matter, expression, and arrangement, appeared in 1730 This

may almost be regarded as a different work It is the 'Seconda Scienza Nuova,' from which the earlier edition is distinguished as the 'Prima Scienza Nuova.' In the 'Prima Scienza' the procedure is, in the main, analytic and inductive, and the establishment of principles is chiefly aimed at In the 'Seconda Scienza' the method followed is, on the whole, synthetic and constructive, principles are largely assumed, and applications abound A third edition appeared shortly before the author's death, at a time when he was incapable of intellectual exertion. Into this edition the additional matter which he had prepared was roughly inserted, not skilfully inwrought, and did more to disfigure than to enrich it Among his smaller compositions subsequent to the first edition of the 'Scienza Nuova,' an oration 'De Mente heroica,' and a brief estimate of Dante, are the most interesting

The latter years of Vico were darkened by heavy domestic afflictions One of his daughters suffered from a grievous malady One of his sons led a wicked life, and required to be confined in prison. The old man had, however, much consolation in two of his family An amiable and cultured daughter, who acquired some reputation as a poetess, was especially dear to him, and his son Gennaro, who succeeded him in the Chair of Rhetoric, if not remarkable for talent, was exemplary, scholarly, and full of reverence for his father

With the accession of the Bourbons to the throne of Naples Vico's worldly circumstances were improved. Charles III. appointed him to the office of historiographer By this time, however, his mental powers were quite broken down. Last and worst of all his

troubles came cancer in the throat and face, slowly accomplishing its dreadful work. His worn and wearied mind still retained sufficient sensibility to feel the pain and bitterness of its lot, and gradually sank into profound melancholy Speech became almost impossible The darkness deepened, and for fourteen months before his death he seemed hardly able to recognise even his own children One day he appeared to waken up as out of a heavy sleep He noticed those around him, he looked on them with an aspect of joy, he addressed to them tender words It was but a short awakening before the long sleep He expired, faintly endeavouring to sing one of the psalms of David, on the 20th of January 1744 Misfortune, he had said, would follow him to the grave, and the word was fulfilled. In the house of death—in the assembly met to convey his body to the tomb—a scandalous dispute arose between the members of the brotherhood of St Sophia, to which he had belonged, and the professors of the university, as to whose right it was to carry the bier So hot and obstinate was the contention, that it ended in the withdrawal of both parties, and it was only on the following day that the remains of one of Italy's greatest thinkers could be deposited in their last resting place

CHAPTER IV.

GENERAL ESTIMATE OF VICO'S CHARACTER AND WORK

THE chief incidents in Vico's life have now been indicated, but it still remains to attempt a brief delineation of his mind and character It will have been observed that his education was of a very strange kind It proceeded quite without law or method. The sole principle of it seems to have been the will of the student Vico not only passed through no university curriculum, but he passed through no regular school course He went for a short time at various periods to classes and lectures, but he was never long before he convinced himself that he could do better without them, and when he arrived at the conclusion he acted upon it He knew nothing of codes or curricula—nothing of "coaching" or "cramming" or "grinding" for examinations; he had no parent or guardian imposing tasks, and seeing that they were carefully performed. He was, to an extent which few men have ever been, what his Cartesian friend Caloprese used to call him, αὐτοδιδάσκαλος He applied himself to ancient philosophy, Roman jurisprudence, canon law, scholastic theology, metaphysics, mathematics, history, poetry, to this book or that, to this question or

that, just as they happened to excite his interest. In his case this utter absence of any prescribed method had a far more excellent result than the latest and most approved educational precepts and provisions can secure. But then, ordinary methods of education are not for extraordinary beings; they cannot produce genius; they are very apt to fetter and impede it. If Vico had not been born with a very extraordinary mind, he never would have attempted to pursue the course of study which he has described in his Autobiography; and certainly, if he had followed such a course, the issue could only have been utter chaos, intellectual ruin. In no inconsiderable measure the consequence was chaos even in his mind for a long period of his life. It is impossible to follow the slow and painful elaboration of his speculations without being deeply impressed with the feeling that one is watching the brooding and toiling of a mighty spirit engaged in reducing a chaos of thoughts and facts and fancies into order and harmony, and without perceiving that even at the very end of his labours he had only partially succeeded. Chaos was to the last largely unsubdued. But Vico kept patiently striving and toiling to subdue it. His genius was not that of the bright, quick, versatile man, who applies himself for a time to a piece of intellectual work, performs it, and then dismisses it from his mind, and applies himself to something else. It was the genius of the brooding, profound, self-criticising man, who can never feel that any piece of work is completed; who is continually examining anew all his mental possessions; who is ever going back to look from new points of view, and, with reference to new relations, at results

previously reached, who does not so much pass from one piece of work to another, as from the expression or exposition of one stage of his own life to that of another. It was an essentially self-developing, self-forming genius, which steadily laboured, from internal, inborn impulse, to reduce everything that came within its range of apprehension to unity and harmony and conformity with its own ideals

Its range was not universal. Vico was no Aristotle or Leibniz. He was but a sorry mathematician. He obviously knew very little about any department of physical science. He was not a great metaphysician His strength lay in those departments of knowledge which relate to the workings of the mind and to the moral and political relationships and history of man It is in connection with comparative and applied psychology, with philology, with mythology, with jurisprudence, with literary history, and with the philosophy of history, that his name will be remembered, but in this connection his comprehensiveness and his profundity were alike admirable. Over the whole of this vast territory, although many of its provinces were almost unknown in his time, his mind had ranged, inquired, and theorised in such a way that many of the conclusions at which he arrived have been found in a multitude of cases to have been most wonderful anticipations of theories which have been established, or which have been rendered popular, only within the present century

The intellect of Vico was far from being in all respects trustworthy Its great qualities were accompanied by corresponding defects which were allowed to remain uncorrected. From the first there was not a little of

arbitrariness in its constitution, and that increased as time advanced Not even the most studious youthful genius can be safely left to the entire freedom of his own will Strict and judicious educational discipline might have done our philosopher much good He never acquired the power of keeping his imagination in due restraint, of distinguishing clearly between the possible, probable, and certain, of knowing when a proposition was sufficiently proved, and when not, of ordering his thoughts and arranging his proofs in a distinct and appropriate manner He was easily misled by false analogies He was ingenious in devising perverse interpretations He abounds in futile as well as in fruitful conjectures. His erudition was large, owing to his industry—rare, owing to his originality—and completely at his command, because wholly acquired by his own independent exertions, but it was also often most inaccurate and illusory He could devise his celebrated solution of the problem of the Homeric poems, and yet fall into blunders like the one already specified regarding Zeno and Aristotle on indivisible points He had read not only widely but with strenuous application, and yet his references to the opinions of others are very unreliable, owing to his inability to distinguish in recollection what he had received from what it had suggested

But notwithstanding these defects, his intellect was of a very high order It was characterised by a keen sense of the unity of knowledge, of the relatedness of things, of the presence of law and system throughout the universe It was constitutionally philosophical as distinguished from merely scientific, and was therefore

incapable of working contentedly in a narrow sphere, without thought of what lay beyond It had a singularly tenacious grasp of any principle on which it once laid hold, —a rare persistency in following up the thoughts which suggested themselves to it,—an admirable perseverance in working out its ideas in all directions Vico's labours consequently impress us by their unbroken continuity from first to last, and their final result has the grandeur which can only be produced by long and incessant elaboration Then, while his imagination often led him astray, it was undoubtedly also a main source of his success, a prime element in his constitution as an original thinker Only a rare endowment of imagination could have enabled him to understand and appreciate so truthfully as he did the conditions and manifestations of human life in its ruder stages Our age has been taught by many teachers and a variety of circumstances and influences to judge sympathetically and intelligently of the earliest generations of historical men; but Vico's age was utterly incapable of this, and that he was found capable of it was due to his having been doubly dowered with the vision alike of the philosopher and the poet

He was, we must not forget, a poet He wrote a great deal of poetry Verses from his pen are to be found in almost all the poetical collections of his age It was to a large extent by writing poetry that he made a livelihood. And the general opinion of his contemporaries as to his poetry was highly favourable. Most of those who knew him thought, there can be no doubt, that his poetry would live when his philosophical compositions would be forgotten The reverse, it need scarcely be said, has proved to be the case Nobody

of his writings is that which posterity has seen reason to adopt. He owes his place in history to his philosophical works. These will all come before us in the order in which they were composed and published; for in no other order can they be naturally studied, each of them representing a stage or phase of the vast and profound process of thought which gave to the mental life of Vico its distinctive value. In the introductory academic lectures delivered from 1699 to 1708, some of their author's chief conceptions were presented in a vague but suggestive form. The views there expressed as to the nature of science, as to the relation of knowledge to life, and as to the true method of study may be regarded as the germs of his whole system of thought. And however vague in conception these discourses may appear they cannot be denied to have had the great merit of insisting that philosophy is not to be constructed merely out of the contents of any single mind, but must take account of the workings of the collective mind of humanity as revealed in religion, literature, language, and history,—that individual sense or consciousness must be supplemented and corrected and guided by common-sense or consciousness. The work on 'The Wisdom of the ancient Italians' is an attempt to apply an idea involved in the one just mentioned,—an attempt to prove that even the most secret and subtle elements, operations, and laws of mind may be traced by a sufficiently profound and extensive analysis of language. The works on jurisprudence showed that the phenomena of law could only be understood when studied in their historical connections. They brought to light the principles of what is called the historical method, and applied them

Spinoza, more than the 'Essay on the Human Understanding' is to Locke, and vastly more than is any work of Plato or Aristotle, Descartes or Leibniz, Hobbes or Berkeley, Kant, Fichte, or Schelling, to these authors It mastered, is Vico understood.

Enough, so far as the purpose of this chapter is concerned, may now have been said as to the intellect and intellectual work of Vico, but a few remarks are still required regarding his character as a man.

He was sincerely and deeply religious Like Plato, he looked up to God as the principle both of existence and knowledge He deemed it his task as a philosopher to demonstrate that all things come from God, return to Him, and subsist by Him, and that apart from Him there is nothing but failure and falsehood [1] He expected from truth satisfaction for the emotional and spiritual as well as for the intellectual nature The knowledge of divine things which perfects human character and regulates human life seemed to him to be alone entitled to be considered true knowledge Without being pious no one can be wise [2] Especially strong was his sense of a divine providence. He traced the evils of his time mainly to the enfeeblement of faith in God's government of the world. His Autobiography and letters show

[1] "De divinarum atque humanarum rerum notitia hæc agam tria, de *origine*, de *circulo*, de *constantiâ* et ostendam *origine*, omnes a Deo provenire, *circulo*, ad Deum redire omnes, *constantiâ*, in Deo omnes constare, omnesque eas ipsas præter Deum lapsus esse et errores'—Opere, vol. iii. p 14

[2] The concluding words of the 'Seconda Scienza Nuova' are · "In somma, da tutto cio che si e in quest' opera ragionato, e da finalmente conchiudersi che questa scienza porta indivisibilmente seco lo studio della pieta, e che, se non siesi *pio* non si può daddovero esser *saggio*"

that he habitually regarded his afflictions as parts of a wise and benevolent discipline. He gloried in being a Christian and a Catholic. When his theological speculations were least in harmony with the teaching of the doctors of his Church, it was far from his intention to challenge or alter the common faith. He has recorded the pride he felt because the New Science had originated in Roman Catholic Italy, and not in Protestant England, Germany, or Holland.[1]

In the domestic relationships of life our philosopher seems to have been most exemplary; a good husband, on whom much more than his fair share of household anxieties was devolved; an affectionate father, who entered into the amusements of his children, devoted much time to their education, and felt keenly both the good and the evil which befell them.[2] In his general intercourse with men he appears to have been timid and reserved. He had clearly not the power of commanding worldly success or of conducting practical affairs. He never attempted to take any independent part in public or political life. Want of worldly enterprise and tact was no doubt to a considerable extent the cause of his passing through life poor and neglected, although his originality as a thinker must be allowed to have been also a reason why his reputation among his contemporaries was far from corresponding to his merits.

He was naturally disposed to melancholy, and would, perhaps, not have been a very happy man even if prosperity had been allotted him. As misfortune was al-

[1] Opere, vol. iv. p. 392.

[2] The evidence is that supplied by the Marquis Villarosa. See Appendix to the "Vita," Opere, vol. iv. pp. 416-420.

most his constant companion, it is not wonderful that he was often deeply despondent The high value he set upon his own doctrines, and his lively susceptibility to the favourable opinion of others, made neglect so much the more painful to him. His letters and Autobiography show that he felt keenly the want of intelligent appreciation shown towards his more important writings In the very care with which he has recorded the compliments of persons of distinction on the lightest products of his pen, we have an indication of the disappointment he must have experienced at the indifference with which his greatest works were regarded. He was by no means a naturally self-sufficing man, needing and desiring no approbation beyond that of his own reason and conscience The love of applause and of fame were exceptionally strong in him. In this respect his spirit was far more Greek and Roman than Christian. In his public addresses to the students of the university of Naples his chief appeal is throughout to the desire of glory attainable by high excellence. "Contemptâ famâ, contemnuntur virtutes," might have been their general text

He himself dispensed praise with much too lavish hands It was the fashion among the literary men of Italy in his day to address persons of rank in obsequious language, and to flatter one another in extravagant terms Few erred more in this way than Vico The most ephemeral celebrities were eulogised in his pages as if the world had seldom or never known their equals We must not judge this by the standard of the present day. We must give due weight to all mitigating circumstances We must remember that he followed a prevalent custom;

that being not only lowly born, poor, and dependent, but simple-minded and imaginative, he viewed high dignitaries through an atmosphere of illusion and romance; that he was very sensible to kindly appreciation, and could only repay it out of his resources as poet and rhetorician; that his laudations were open and ingenuous, without the slightest trace of guile, &c. Yet one cannot but wish that no excuses had been needed, while all excuses which can be offered must fail to do away with the painful impression produced by the contemplation of genius demeaning itself. No one could have been better aware than Vico that the petty celebrities whom he praised were neither intellectual giants nor moral heroes; that his age was not a splendid but a degenerate one; that he was not a lesser but a very much greater man than those before whom he humbled himself.

CHAPTER V.

ACADEMIC ORATIONS—GENERAL PHILOSOPHICAL AIMS

THE development of thought which took place in the mind of Vico and produced "the New Science" can be traced throughout its whole course Once begun, it went on without interruption, until it was as complete as it could be expected to become in a single intellect. The temptation to distribute it into periods according to a symmetrical plan has proved too strong for some Italian authors, and has led them to attempt to force on it arbitrary and artificial formulæ of division. In reality, it was a continuous process of enlargement and enrichment, and in order to follow it, all that is needed is to study Vico's works in their chronological order, and in relation to the circumstances in which they were produced.

The initial traces of his philosophy are to be found in the introductory Academic Orations delivered between 1699 and 1708. These discourses contain some excellent thoughts excellently expressed. They are always elevated in tone, and everywhere warmed by the breath of a vigorous vitality Their main interest, however, is historical. Had they been lost, Vico's fame would not have been less bright, nor his work less complete But

the genesis of his system would have been less apparent He congratulated himself on having published only the discourses of 1708,—on the ground that "one ought not to burden with more books the republic of letters, which has already a greater load of them than it can bear, but should publish only such as contain important discoveries and useful inventions" Very soon after their delivery he became aware of their imperfections The further he advanced in his philosophical course the more clearly must he have seen that only the dawnings of the great argument which it was the task of his life to develop had shone through them He naturally desired to be judged, not by his first vague aspirations and dim anticipations, but by his matured convictions and fully evolved system He had ample reason for not committing these slight and occasional discourses to the press, while he at the same time showed an accurate perception of their relationship to his subsequent writings, which constitutes their special and abiding interest, by the account which he gave of them in his Autobiography Yet the student of his philosophy must be glad to possess them. The very reason which kept Vico from publishing them—namely, that they touched the great theme of his later speculations only slightly, and from a distance—now gives them an additional interest, as it assures us that we see in them his philosophy in its simplest germs, in its primary formative tendencies.

The last and most elaborate of these discourses—the 'De nostri temporis studiorum ratione'—was, as has already been stated, committed to the press by the author himself shortly after it was delivered. The second discourse, minus the opening paragraph, was first published

in 1833 by the Marquis of Villarosa in an edition of "Vico's 'Latin Opuscula'" The missing sentences, and the other discourses, have been recently given to the public by Antonio Galasso in his 'Cinque Orazioni Inedite di Gian Battista Vico' It appears that the philosopher presented a written copy of the Academic Orations to his friend Antonio da Palazzuollo, a Capuchin monk, with a dedication in which he expresses the belief "ut luculentiori vita in ejus amplissima cellula quam publicis literarum typis consignatus fruatur" This MS, after lying long neglected in a library of the Franciscan Capuchins, was transferred, much damaged by worms and moisture, to the national library of Naples, and from it Galasso published in 1869, in the work mentioned above, all that had not previously been printed. By this service he has well earned the gratitude of every student of Vico

A brief indication of the contents of the Orations will be sufficient. It should be helpful to the formation of a correct general view of their author's position, relationships, and aims at the outset of his philosophical career

The first oration is an exhortation to young men to cultivate incessantly what is divine within them. The significance of the Γνῶθι σεαυτόν, which ancient Greek wisdom deemed its wisest utterance, and consecrated to the Delphic Apollo, is strongly insisted on Self-knowledge is represented as not only the condition of all genuine wisdom, but as the chief motive to acquire all other knowledge, and as the end to which all other knowledge should lead It is explained as equivalent to knowing what is really divine in man, and this as equivalent to knowing

the soul itself The relationship of the soul to the body is eloquently set forth as similar to, and only explicable by, the relationship of God to nature Vico held at a later date that the heart is the seat of the soul, in opposition to Descartes, who located it in the pineal gland When the discourse at present under consideration was written, he believed the mind to be present and active in every part and organ of the body, and not confined to any particular spot in the human frame (*nec in ulla corporis parte habet finitum locum*) There follows a description of the divine properties. Then comes an exposition of how the mind, when it turns its attention upon itself, gradually ascends to the knowledge of God The course by which it is represented as passing from doubt to certainty, from the sense of its own imperfection to the assurance of the existence of a perfect Being, is substantially that which Descartes had so much more elaborately traced. The process by which the knowledge of God is thus reached may be, according to Vico, an unconscious one The acquisition of knowledge is, he holds, even when most rapid, largely unconscious It is interesting to see him thus early recognise the importance of spontaneous and unreflective thought. The affirmation that human works may be also divine gifts should likewise be noted, because it, too, reappears as a fundamental principle of "the New Science" Vico, in order to raise his hearers' conceptions of the grandeur of their own nature, proceeds to remind them that the gods worshipped as man's benefactors have been personifications of the powers and dispositions of humanity itself. He brings the oration to a close by insisting that knowledge of all kinds is

natural to the mind, while ignorance is as unnatural to it as smoke is to the eyes, and by urging the propriety of an earnest pursuit of science

The second oration—which has for text the aphorism that "no enemy is more hurtful to an enemy than the foolish man is to himself"—is an exhortation to conform the soul to virtue and wisdom. The principle that God has given special laws to every order of His creatures having been laid down, is forthwith applied to man as a being composed of a mortal body and an immortal soul, and designed to prefer truth to falsehood, virtue to vice, reason to passion, the higher to the lower Then comes a vigorously delineated account of the internal war which arises in the mind of the foolish man who, from perversity, negligence, or levity, violates the true constitution of his nature Vico himself, in his Autobiography, notes these parts of the discourse as anticipations of the doctrine in his 'De universi juris uno principio et fine uno' The world is next viewed as the city of God, because pervaded and ruled by His reason, and wisdom as that which confers on man citizenship therein, seeing that wisdom is the apprehension and reception of divine reason by the human intellect The life of the reason of man is in the reason of God, and truth for man lies in the union and harmony of these two reasons Inasmuch as God by reason originates things, so by reason the wise man knows them. Here may perhaps be, as Galasso supposes, the first vague conception of the celebrated doctrine regarding the conversion of truth and fact which was afterwards expounded in the 'De antiquissima Italorum sapientiâ' Truth is viewed as an accordance and communion of the divine and human intellects by which

knowledge is realised and perfected, the will rendered free and strong and power over self secured and increased. Wisdom and virtue are traced to the same root, and exhibited as inseparably connected.

The third oration may be considered as a sort of appendix to the two orations which precede it Literature is assumed to have the noble functions of yielding both nourishment and solace to the mind. But just because it is in its own proper nature alike most profitable and most pleasant, its abuses are the least tolerable of all the evils which men have perversely brought upon themselves. The corruption of what is best is worst. All artifice and intrigue, insincerity and pretence, should therefore be carefully expelled from the republic of letters. Such is the burden of the oration. Those who are aware what an important position Vico occupies in the history of literary criticism will not fail to remark with interest his ridicule of the petty and carping criticism which overlooks great general merits in its eagerness to discover the slightest defects; his advice to such as would become true scholars and just judges of literature to learn above all how and what to admire; and the manner in which he traces the pretentiousness and censoriousness prevalent among critics to their ignorance and incompetence. In the concluding part of the discourse he reminds his hearers that a thorough mastery even over a single language or science is very difficult to acquire; indicates how prone philosophers are to endeavour to conceal their want of knowledge by words and phrases, when they ought candidly to confess their ignorance; affirms that the truly learned man is distinguished others by his consciousness of ignorance in re

what they believe themselves to know; and exhorts those who would devote themselves to the pursuit of truth to live sincerely and ingenuously, and really to be what they desire to seem to be.

The aim of the fourth oration is to show that science should not be cultivated with any selfish view, but from a desire to promote the common welfare. He who would pursue knowledge aright must, Vico maintains, bear constantly in mind "the amplitude of its end"—its essential and universal utility—and seek to assimilate himself to God, whose nature it is to do good to all. With this oration the fifth is closely connected. It has the interest of being Vico's earliest known attempt at historical generalisation. Its design is to prove that the nations and epochs in which science and literature have flourished have been also those famous in war. In the selection of examples intended to establish this thesis a few historical mistakes appear; but the relationship of arms to letters is suggestively, although briefly, treated, and the contrast in character and tendencies between barbarous and civilised war—the war of blind passion and brute force and the war which is guided and controlled by intelligence and justice—is strongly marked.

The thought which pervades the first oration reappears in the sixth, but in a considerably more definite form, so as to show the progress which had been made between 1699 and 1707 Self-knowledge is represented in this sixth discourse as determining the aim and order of the whole system of human studies. Let a man acquaint himself with his condition as a fallen being, and he will find that harmony within himself and communion with his fellows are broken and prevented by the imperfec-

tions of his speech, the false opinions of his intellect, and the vices of his heart. Eloquence, science, and virtue are the only remedies for these three penal consequences of sin. Their common purpose is to undo the effects of the Fall. They can alone restore unity to humanity. They are intimately and essentially connected. They coalesce in that wisdom which is the bond of human perfection—the conformity of man's nature to its divine standard and type. True and certain knowledge, right action, and appropriate language, are what education must aim at conferring on humanity, for not otherwise can humanity be united, strong, and in accordance with its idea. As to the order of study, language, being the direct means of human communion, and its acquisition chiefly the work of memory, which is the faculty strongest in children, should be the first subject of instruction. As imagination is, however, also active in children, and their minds can only be interested and impressed through examples, history and fable should be conjoined with language. Next, partly to weaken and exhaust imagination, the source of all our errors and evils, and partly to discipline immature reason by exercising it on the simplest objects, and those with which memory and imagination can be most readily occupied, mathematics, or rather geometry, should be studied. It naturally leads to physics—the knowledge of the material universe. Mathematics and physics prepare the mind for considering the absolute being and unity which metaphysics aspires to reach. The knowledge of intelligence acquired in metaphysical reflection draws the attention of the soul on itself and on its relationship to the Supreme. The result is an acquaintance

with its own imperfections which is indispensable to the profitable study of morals. Pagan or natural ethics must come in the course of inquiry to be recognised as inadequate, and recourse will then naturally be taken to the divine revelations with which Christian theology is conversant, and on which alone a completely satisfactory moral system can be founded. When these various disciplines have had their due influence upon the mind, the time has arrived for its initiation into the science of Christian jurisprudence.

Vico himself refers us to the orations which have been passed in review, and especially to the last, as showing that the idea of a vast and original system uniting in a single principle all sciences affected his speculations from a very early period. The evidence which they afford of this must be admitted to be sufficient But the oration delivered in 1708, and published in a somewhat enlarged form soon after its delivery—the 'De nostri temporis studiorum ratione'—marks a decided advance in the direction which they opened up It is more elaborate and of greater intrinsic importance. In it the originality of Vico is seen to have become conscious of itself and capable of expressing itself In it he appears as a man confident that he has gained an intellectual position from which he can survey and estimate aright the whole world of past and contemporary thought It is his declaration that he is neither an ancient nor a modern, but feels himself competent to pronounce as a judge on all the mental aims and labours both of antiquity and modern times. The attitude which he assumes in it towards ancient and modern research—towards classical, scholastic, and later philo-

sophy—is one of independence and superiority It implies belief in having grasped a higher synthesis than any which had been previously attained. The discourse is of great autobiographical interest, for it is indirectly a delineation of its author's intellectual condition at the time when he felt as if he had just touched the top of the Pisgah from which he could descry the whole land of truth It also, as we shall afterwards perceive, leads up and links on both to the work on metaphysics and to the works on jurisprudence which Vico subsequently published.

The aim of the discourse is to compare the ancient and modern methods of study Its author wished it to be regarded as a supplement to Lord Bacon's "golden book," 'De Augmentis Scientiarum.' It begins by an indication of various respects in which the moderns have surpassed the ancients The latter were ignorant of the new criticism, of the application of analysis to geometry and of mathematics to physics, of chemical experimentation, of the telescope, microscope, and magnetic needle, they were greatly deficient as regards geographical and astronomical knowledge, unacquainted with printing, and destitute of any schools like universities Next the question is raised, Are not the advantages of the moderns accompanied by dangers and inconveniences which require to be noted and guarded against? Vico answers in the affirmative, and proceeds to inquire what these dangers and inconveniences are.

The new criticism is first examined. This criticism —which claims to be the universal instrument of science and art—is only to be satisfied with pure truth and absolute certainty It rejects not only what is plainly

false, but all that is merely probable. It will allow us to believe nothing which we can doubt without manifest absurdity. Vico pronounces it a grave error to take this new criticism as the rule of education. He maintains that the power of apprehending and weighing probabilities is of greater importance, and should be earlier cultivated, than that of observing pure and indubitable truths or of deriving from them rigidly necessary deductions. It is the former power which constitutes the common-sense which is the chief source of mental life and the true guide of practice. Early initiation into the critical method, he argues, leaves unemployed the faculties which are most active in well-constituted youthful natures, disqualifies for the apprehension of truth in general, unfits for ordinary business, and deadens or destroys a genius for poetry, oratory, or jurisprudence. He commends the ancients for generally using geometry as the logic by which immature minds were to be habituated to the exercise of reason.

His next position is that the art of proof or verification (Critica) should not be cultivated, as it was by his contemporaries, to the exclusion of the art of discovery or invention (Topica) The latter ought to have the precedence. Things must be apprehended before they can be tested. Reasons must be found before their worth can be determined. Young persons need, in the first place, to have their minds stored with facts drawn from all sorts of sciences and arts, and their faculties variously employed on suitable objects and in appropriate exercises. Only after they have made some progress in learning should they be required rigidly to prove and verify what they have learned, supposing it can be so

proved and verified. The topic art, it is true, is not to be wholly severed from the critical. Logical verification must to some extent accompany intellectual acquisition. Yet the rule of nature is that acquisition should precede criticism, not that criticism should be practised as if it were inclusive of acquisition.

Vico passes onwards into regions where his competency to act as judge was not great. He objects to the introduction of the geometrical method into physics, on the grounds that it gives an appearance of demonstration without its real force, and weakens the power of the intellect to perceive the more remote relations of things. In the paragraph devoted to this subject he uses words which contain in germ his theory of the criterion of certainty. "In geometry we demonstrate, because we create; before we demonstrate in physics we must be able to create there also." He depreciates the application of mathematical analysis to mechanics. Algebra seemed to him a sort of self-acting machine which affords no scope for the exercise of mind. Modern medicine he charges with neglecting induction, the observation of symptoms, and hygiene, and with trusting too exclusively to deduction, the study of causes, and therapeutics.

The worst result, however, according to Vico, of the modern method of study, is the undue prominence given to physical science and the want of interest taken in mental and moral subjects. The moderns pursue in study truth alone, and they expect to find it only in what is fixed and certain—the nature of things. They do not look for it in the nature of man, which, being free, acts in an indeterminate and uncertain manner. Hence there is wanting an adequate doctrine of the human soul

and its relationships, as well as a civil and political philosophy fitted to be of practical use. This reflection leads Vico to insist that science and prudence are, and must always be, distinct, and that the attempt to substitute science for prudence must in various spheres of life be delusive and mischievous.

He proceeds to illustrate this from the history of jurisprudence. Then he compares the advantages and disadvantages of the ancient and modern methods of dealing with law. This discussion on jurisprudence forms a large portion of the discourse, and was probably a part of it which was not delivered. The original and important ideas which it contains reappear in our author's later writings on law, and so do not require to be considered at present.

In drawing the discourse to a close, Vico points out that the wealth of means and resources possessed by the modern intellect is not without its drawbacks and dangers. The multitude of statues, paintings, poems, &c., now extant, is in some respects unfavourable to the attainment of high excellence in art. The easy multiplication of books by printing spreads a frivolous and degrading literature, as well as that which is admirable and elevating. Although the Greeks had no universities, a Greek philosopher was often a university in himself, whereas what the moderns call universities have often no unity of principle, method, or aim. Our author, in conclusion, excuses himself for having treated of so vast a theme. As a professor of eloquence he feels himself bound to study all arts and sciences. Eloquence is an aspect or manifestation of the wisdom with which all science and art, philosophy and practice, are con-

versant It is the wisdom which expresses itself with elegance, with affluence, and conformably to the common sense—the common mind and sentiments—of man.

The foregoing analysis of Vico's Academical Orations may help us to determine the position and attitude which he took up in the world of philosophical thought from the outset of his career as teacher and author The following remarks may, however, be a needful, or at least useful, supplement to it.

The Orations are all mainly pedagogic in contents and character From a very early period of his life Vico theorised earnestly on education. It was the warmth and ingenuity with which he expounded in conversation his views on the different methods suited for the study of law which led the Bishop of Ischia to appoint him tutor to his nephews at Vatolla. The Orations show that the years which followed had only deepened his interest in such questions And the more closely we study his philosophy and philosophical development, the more clearly, I think, must we perceive that an educational ideal underlies and pervades them. Whether his conception of philosophy should be traced to his conception of education or his conception of education to his conception of philosophy, it were idle to inquire, just because the two conceptions grew up together and contributed to form each other, but obviously pedagogic theorising had much to do with Vico's whole course and system of thought. Left almost from childhood to study what and how he pleased, the very want of a law over him was the occasion of an earlier appearance of the law within him His natural thought-

fulness and conscientiousness constrained him, in the absence of external authority, to call himself the more strictly to account before his own reason and moral sense for the steps which he took in his course of self-training. This, again, forced him, even prematurely perhaps, to raise and discuss those questions as to the nature of the mind, the action of its faculties, their order of development, their appropriate exercises, the chief end and destination of human life, &c., in which education and philosophy are alike deeply concerned. A general result of his meditations was a vivid and deep impression both of the self-identity of our spiritual life and of the variety of our spiritual capacities and powers. He came to conceive of human nature as a freely acting, elaborately formed, spiritual organism, one in all that it does, wholly present in each act, and yet manifold in aspects, and rich in distinct principles. Its culture, he naturally inferred, should correspond to its character. It should aim at the formation of a perfect man,—at the development to the full, and in due order, of all the powers and resources of humanity. To regard man as merely intellect, education as simply the training of reason, philosophy as no more than a theory of science, seemed to him grave errors, necessarily involved in one another. None of his contemporaries had exalted science above all other knowledge, and scientific discipline above all other modes of culture, in so explicit and extreme a manner as Professor Huxley, Mr Spencer, and other writers of our own age have done;[1] but he saw in those tendencies of his

[1] Professor Huxley's Lecture on "A Liberal Education, and where to find it", and Mr Spencer's 'Education,' chap. i.—"What Knowledge is of most worth?"

time which found their clearest expression in Cartesianism principles necessarily leading to such exaggerations, and dislike and dread of them were among the most potent of the motives which impelled him to search for a catholic and comprehensive philosophy, and for a new science which might be corrective of views so narrow and hurtful.

To understand the philosophy of Vico, it is essential to bear in mind that its object was not merely the attainment of scientific truth. It was a great deal more than a general theory of science. Philosophy in the widest sense in which he used the term—the sense which it bears in the Orations—is the love of wisdom. And wisdom, while inclusive of science, is far more extensive, being the perfection and satisfaction of the entire nature of man. The wise man must be enlightened by truth, possessed of a strong memory and a refined imagination; able in practical affairs, and eloquent in speech; an admirer of poetry and painting, and versed in jurisprudence, independent and critical in judgment, yet not disregarding authority nor undervaluing probability; a believer in revelation, and obedient to the Christian rule of life. This is the ideal which philosophy, according to the Orations, ought to keep steadily in view. It was not, however, until the publication of the writings on jurisprudence that the doctrine concerning wisdom assumed definiteness and articulateness. Only in the New Science did it appear fully developed.

That he thus conceived of philosophy was obviously due, to a considerable extent, to what may almost be regarded as professional bias. In other words, the two studies with which he was most occupied—rhetoric and

jurisprudence — tended to favour the adoption of the view. It was natural that as a professor of eloquence he should "magnify his office," and consider philosophy in relation to it. In Cicero we have a memorable instance of the influence which oratorical predilections may exert on a man's philosophy. Vico is a real, although much less conspicuous, example of the same kind. He formed the loftiest possible conception of the nature of eloquence and the dignity of the orator, describing the one as wisdom expressed and adorned by words, and holding that the other should be a master of every art and science and an impersonation of excellence It was a natural consequence that he should be hostile to any philosophy which aimed at being exclusively critical, or professed to rest entirely on rigorous reasoning If philosophy be not "topical" as well as "critical,"—if it fail to take into account probabilities as well as certainties—if it refuse to support itself on common-sense as well as on pure reason,—it cannot be so thoroughly the complement of eloquence, or so entirely favourable to eloquence, as Vico supposed. His opposition to the method of Descartes was in fact avowedly on the ground that that method was injurious to eloquence, it was in part the opposition of a professor of eloquence to a mathematician. His idea of correcting its exclusiveness by the Topica was one especially likely to occur to a teacher of rhetoric familiar with the ancient writings on oratory

Jurisprudence exerted on Vico's mind an even greater influence than rhetoric, and its influence tended to the same general result Accepting the definition of it given by the Roman jurists,—" the knowledge of things divine

and human,"—he regarded it, as we perceive from the sixth oration and 'De Ratione,' as the study which completed and crowned, unified and utilised, all other studies. Now this was clearly so far a unification of his own knowledge and speculation, and naturally determined in a considerable measure the direction and development of his subsequent thinking. It explains how the philosophy of law of his 'De Constantiâ Jurisprudentiæ' may be described as the philosophy of history of his 'Scienza Nuova' in an imperfectly evolved condition. It also so far explains his resolution to find a philosophy which would give an account of men not as solitary but as social beings, and which would promote social union, strength, and progress. A main cause of his dissatisfaction with the philosophy of his age was, that it seemed to him to be one which, like the philosophy of the Stoics and Sceptics in ancient Greece, tended to dissolve society, to dissociate men, to lose sight of humanity, nations, and families, in the contemplation of isolated individuals. This individualism or atomism in philosophy was viewed by him with a persistent aversion, which his admiration of jurisprudence contributed to form and confirm. In jurisprudence he also found a support for his belief in the necessity of assigning an important place in a general system of thought to authority, probability, and the insight of genius or experience. A philosophy which thus exalted jurisprudence was bound to aim at being practical. Both philosophy and jurisprudence, according to the representation of Vico, should issue in the wisdom which comprehends intellectual and moral excellence,—the wisdom which is *hominis consummatrix*.

The ideal disclosed in the Orations he obviously deemed to have been, on the whole, better apprehended and better realised by the Greeks and Romans than by his own contemporaries A Greek philosopher, who was "a university in himself," or a Roman orator learned in jurisprudence and expert in affairs, came nearer to his conception of a "wise" man than the scientists and specialists whom he saw around him. The powers of the classical world were those which had the greatest influence in moulding his thoughts Classical mythology, history, poetry, philosophy, and law were the chief sources both of his inspiration and of his information His keenness in detecting and eagerness to correct the defects of the modern method of studies arose from admiration of the freedom with which Plato theorised, and of the rhetorical and erudite amplitude of discussion displayed in the philosophical writings of Cicero, and from a zeal for the interests of literature, learning, and society —a zeal which had been kindled at Greek and Roman fires Bacon and Grotius became his teachers only after he had been long under the authority of Plato, Tacitus, and Cicero, and their influence was always secondary and subordinate to that of his earlier masters

In the Orations Vico finds occasion to express belief in God, in divine Providence, in the immortality of the soul, in the doctrine of human depravity, and in the alone adequacy of the Christian scheme of morals to regulate human life, in a way which shows that he thought a true philosophy would be clearly and decidedly affirmative on all these positions In this respect he never wavered. Religious belief, to the extent indicated, entered into and affected all his subsequent speculations.

It even increased in clearness and comprehensiveness with the general expansion of his system He was constitutionally serious and devout, and may justly be spoken of as a religious and a Christian thinker It would be an inexcusable oversight not to indicate distinctly so prominent a feature of his character as his piety But it is equally necessary to remind the reader that exaggerated representations have been made in this connection, and even by writers the most opposed in their principles and professions His philosophy has been described as, like the scholastic systems, largely resting on Christianity, and as constructed in the interests of a theology or a Church. On this ground some have eulogised it as an admirable example of the only true kind of philosophy, and others condemned it as a system of a manifestly antiquated and obsolete nature The praise and censure are alike undeserved, for the preconception on which both proceed is a mere imagination. Vico regarded the few general religious truths which I have mentioned as principles in which philosophy was deeply concerned, and he supposed that philosophy and Christianity were not antagonistic but accordant. He made no attempt, however, to found his system on Christianity, and he derived from Christianity little of the material which he employed in the construction of his system. Greek myths, Latin etymologies and locutions, and especially the philosophy, history, and law of the ancient heathen world, were sources from which he drew much more freely than from the Christian Scriptures. Even the doctrines of the Divine existence, of Providence, and of immortality, seemed to him dictates of the common-sense of humanity He found them in Plato and Cicero as

well as in the Bible. There is no evidence of his having studied any work of early Christian literature except Augustine's 'De Civitate Dei' and the Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius. He appears, in fact, to have had strangely little interest in Christian systematic theology Probably he was afraid to venture any considerable distance on such dangerous ground

Vico was Roman Catholic, but neither in the Orations nor in his other works has he introduced the distinctive doctrines of Roman Catholicism He shared the prejudice—almost universal among the Roman Catholics of his time—that Lutheranism and Calvinism substituted Fatalism and Necessity for Providence and Free-will, and on this ground he deemed them inconsistent with a philosophy which would satisfy the general reason of mankind. On the other hand, he sometimes took occasion to affirm that his own doctrines were in harmony with the Catholic faith, even when the relevancy of the remark was far from obvious He was manifestly resolved to commit himself as a philosopher only to the assertion of a few fundamental religious principles involved in the common faith of humanity, and, at the same time, to avoid if possible affording any occasion or pretext for accusations of heresy His reticence in regard to all but the most general and essential doctrines of religion is a fact which should be distinctly noted. It is altogether erroneous to represent his philosophy as a Roman Catholic philosophy He may have got, and probably did get, from Catholicism, as well as from classical antiquity, a portion of his aversion to individualism, and of his appreciation of authority and of common-sense or collective reason. Roman

Catholicism is naturally corrective of the individualism to which Protestantism often incidentally leads. In this respect Vico may be reasonably supposed to have been not only influenced, but influenced for good, by the Roman Catholic medium in which he lived. His doctrine of authority, however, as we shall afterwards see, is entirely distinct from the ordinary Roman Catholic doctrine of the authority of the Church, and even from the partly philosophical and partly ecclesiastical doctrine of authority maintained by writers of the theocratic school.

Since the philosophy of Vico was not subordinate or subservient to a theology received on authority, it cannot, without impropriety, be described as *scholastic*. It was a philosophy which sought to proceed in a path which diverged widely from that of theology. It made no use of theological dogmas as data. It professed to employ only the methods proper to a philosophy. Vico did not indulge in attacks on scholasticism, like the writers who maintained the cause of the Renaissance in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Such attacks were in his day no longer needed. The triumph of the modern spirit was, in spite of Jesuitism, secured. But Vico had no sympathy with scholasticism. He objected to it that it had humiliated the reason by resting everything on authority, and that its apparent order was really disorder. He acknowledged that Descartes had rendered a great service to humanity by effectually freeing reason from the bondage of scholasticism. To the Aristotelianism with which scholasticism had so largely identified itself he assumed a generally hostile attitude. He was a true modern, although one who did not entirely tran-

scend the limits of his own age and country, and who had a reverence for the past which many philosophers of the present day may deem excessive.

In the next chapter we shall find the most appropriate place to exhibit the relation of his abstract or metaphysical philosophy to that of his more immediate predecessors and to his contemporaries.

CHAPTER VI

VICO'S METAPHYSICS

I. GENERAL.

THE discourse on the Method of Studies was followed by *a treatise on the Primitive Wisdom of the Italians* This was merely the first or metaphysical part of a work intended to treat also of physics and ethics, but the latter parts never appeared. The part published bears two titles,—the one general, 'De Antiquissima Italorum Sapientia ex Linguæ Latinæ originibus eruenda Libri Tres,' and the other special, 'Liber Primus sive Metaphysicus ad nobilissimum virum Paullum Matthiam Doriam præstantissimum philosophum scriptus Neapoli an. MDCCX.' The discussion between its author and an anonymous but able reviewer in the 'Giornale dei Letterati d'Italia,' forms an appendix considerably larger than the treatise itself. It is, however, an interesting and needed supplement, with which the treatise requires to be throughout carefully compared. Treatise and appendix will sometimes, for the sake of brevity and convenience, be referred to in the following pages simply as the Metaphysics.[1]

[1] The treatise is written in Latin, and contained in Opere, vol ii

Vico, discoursing in his Autobiography of the state in which he found science in Naples on his return from Vatolla, writes thus "The metaphysics which, in the sixteenth century, had placed in the highest rank of literature a Marsilio Ficino, a Pico of Mirandola, an Augustine Nifo and Augustine Steuco, a James Mazzoni, an Alexander Piccolomini, a Matthew Aquaviva, a Francis Patrizzio—and which did so much for poetry, history, and eloquence, that all Greece, in the time of her utmost learning and grace of speech, seemed to have risen again in Italy—was deemed worthy only of being shut up in the cloisters "[1]

This encomium on these authors as metaphysicians suggests the question, Did Vico derive much of his doctrine from them when engaged in constructing his own metaphysical system? The answer must, I believe, be in the negative. Although undoubtedly influenced by their writings in various ways, he was, so far as I can perceive, but little indebted to them in the special sphere of metaphysics. To Marsilio Ficino as a translator he lay under immense obligation. He owed to him the most of what he knew about Platonism. But his judgment of Platonism was his own, and very different from Ficino's He did not, like Ficino, sacrifice even to Plato his mental independence While to Ficino Plato seemed a being filled with superhuman wisdom, whose utterances ought to be received as divine oracles, to Vico he was merely a very eminent philosopher, quite liable to err, and from whom it was no presumption freely to dissent. Then, between the metaphysics of Ficino,

pp 59 109, the appendix is in Italian, and contained in Op, vol. ii pp 110 168'

[1] Opere, vol iv pp 344, 345

expounded in his 'Theologia Platonica,' and the metaphysics of Vico, there is extremely little general resemblance, and as to particular theories, although Werner[1] would trace Vico's doctrine of metaphysical points to Ficino's doctrines of *qualitates efficaces*, this opinion, as we shall afterwards see, cannot be more than very partially true, and may be entirely erroneous. The Prince of Mirandola must have been named chiefly because of the celebrity which he owed to the versatility of his genius and the variety of his accomplishments, to the eagerness and enthusiasm of his pursuit of knowledge, the romance and ostentation of his career, and the rich promise of intellectual achievement blighted by his early death. The mention of Nifo may be regarded as evidence that Vico admired his expositions of Aristotelian doctrine, and probably also that he approved of the part which he had taken in the controversy with Pomponazzi as to the immortality of the soul. Nifo was not an original thinker, and to attempt to trace any of Vico's metaphysical conceptions specially or exclusively to his writings must be fruitless. Steuco, bishop of [illegible] and librarian of the Vatican, was the author of a work, 'De Perenni Philosophia,' published in 1540, dedicated to Pope Paul III, and once very celebrated. It is an attempt to show that a religious philosophy, teaching essentially the same doctrines regarding the existence and attributes of God, the Trinity, the creation of the world and of man, the immortality of the soul, and a future state of rewards and punishments, as the Chris[illegible] tian Scriptures, prevailed from the earliest [illegible] lands and generations. It presents [illegible] religions and philosophies in [illegible]

[1] 'Giambattista Vico als Philosoph und [illegible]

almost to efface the distinctions between them and Christianity It anticipates the argument in Lord Herbert's 'De Religione Gentilium,' published in 1663, and a large section of the reasoning in Cudworth's 'True Intellectual System of the Universe,' published in 1678 It has the interest of being a very early essay in comparative theology Any essay of the kind coming into Vico's hands before he had conceived the plan of his new science, must have been helpful. But his view even of the religious development of humanity differs in various respects from that of Steuco, and as to metaphysical conceptions, there is no trace of his dependence on the earlier writer The points of contact and affinity between Vico and Mazzoni are more numerous. Mazzoni's brilliant 'Difesa della Commedia di Dante' reminds us of Vico's 'Giudizio sopra Dante', his distribution of the forms of life into *active, contemplative, and religious*, and references of all arts and sciences to these forms, is analogous to Vico's famous triad of *Nosse, Velle, Posse*, and its applications, and his comparison of the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle shows a caution, an impartiality, and an independence, which raise him as high as Vico above the partisan point of view of a Ficino or Nifo These are, however, only general, not distinctly metaphysical, resemblances, but even in metaphysics Mazzoni and Vico propounded theories of cognition which have much in common. The *archetypes* of the former and the *genera* of the latter are represented as having nearly the same functions in relation to the matter of experience Both thinkers sought to give an explanation of cognition which would help to harmonise realism and idealism. Alexander Piccolomini wrote in

the vernacular clear and elegant expositions of logic, physics, and ethics, in which may be found various particular thoughts which reappear in Vico, but his essentially Aristotelian metaphysics has little similarity to the metaphysics of Vico Matthew Aquaviva, Duke of Atri and Teramo, had his praises sung by Pontano and Sannazaro He was a munificent patron of the learned, and himself the author of 'Moral Disputations,' which passed at least through two editions, but perhaps he owes the distinction of being mentioned by Vico less to intrinsic merit, or contemporary and posthumous reputation, than to having had among his descendants the Cardinal Trojan Aquaviva, to whom the second 'Scienza Nuova' is dedicated The vast system of heterogeneous notions and fantastic hypotheses which constitute the 'Nova de universis Philosophia' of Patrizzio, is as unlike as can well be conceived to the little handful of peculiar ideas which Vico held to compose a complete body of metaphysical principles.

It appears somewhat strange that Vico should have omitted from his list such names as Telesio, Bruno, and Campanella These men had all been celebrated and influential teachers in his own Naples, and had surpassed in philosophical achievements those whom he named. All of them had contributed to make his own philosophy possible. Telesio had attempted to explain the physical world as he wished to explain the social world Bruno conceived of God's relation to the universe, and of the ultimate constitution of the universe, in a way akin to his. Campanella was his predecessor in historical speculation Can he have passed them over in silence because they had all come under the ban of

the Church? Galileo he has twice referred to, and it is as "maximus Galileo" (Opere, vol. ii p 104), and "il gran Galileo (Opere, vol ii p 124)

Vico tells us that his Metaphysics was suggested by the 'De Sapientia Veterum' of Bacon, and had a similar design to the 'Cratylus' of Plato More than a suggestive impulse Bacon's work cannot have given him. And the general design of the 'Cratylus' is less like that of the 'Metaphysics' than Vico himself perceived. The discussion in the 'Cratylus' turns on the question, Whether the names of things are by nature or convention,—the reflections of the things themselves or the results of institution? This is a primitive and particular form of the fundamental problem of the philosophy of speech—namely, How is language related to reality and to thought? —a problem entirely distinct from the one which Vico proposed to himself, that of recovering from the original words of a language an extinct ancient philosophy. The 'Cratylus' of Plato and the 'Metaphysics' of Vico are, in fact, only alike, inasmuch as there is a large amount of loose etymologising, with a philosophical reference, in both. Vico himself points out that his work is altogether different in scope and character from treatises like the 'Origines' of Varro, the 'De Causis Latinæ Linguæ' of Scaliger, and the 'Minerva' of Sanctius. It is an attempt to discover in the ancient Latin language the ancient Italic philosophy they are attempts to explain the Latin language on philosophical principles

Our philosopher dedicated his 'Metaphysics' to Paul Matthew Doria, a man of high family and of distinguished ability, an intimate friend, and a truly kindred spirit In his Autobiography he tells us that Doria was

the only person with whom he could talk metaphysics, and that he recognised in his reasonings a mind often bright with the divine splendour of Plato. At the same time, he observes that "what Doria admired as sublime and original in Descartes, seemed to himself old and common in the Platonists." This statement has led Bouillier and other historians of philosophy to describe Doria as a Cartesian. In reality, it may refer only to an early period of the intercourse between the two friends, and proves merely that Doria had, at least at one time, a higher appreciation of Descartes' writings than Vico. It should be taken in conjunction with a statement in the dedication of the 'Metaphysics,'—namely, that Doria "gave evidence of a great mind, in that he could admire and praise whatever was great in other eminent philosophers, and yet retain the confidence in himself requisite to allow him to aim at, and succeed in, excelling them." There is no evidence that Doria was ever a Cartesian, except in so far as Descartes was a Platonist. All his works are written from the standpoint of a modified and moderate Platonism. This is true even of his 'Vita Civile,' published in 1700, which attempts to apply philosophical and ethical principles in the political sphere. For seven years, from 1714, he was actively engaged in a war with the mathematical followers of Descartes. The writings which he published during this period contend for the superiority of the old over the new geometry, and insist on the intellectual dangers of algebra and the calculus. They are contained in his 'Delle Opere Matematiche,' published in 1722, and are interesting as showing how widely he differed from Descartes on the fundamental subject of method. The

very titles of his 'Filosofia di Paolo Mattia Doria, con la quale si schiarisce quella di Platone,' 1728, and of his 'Difesa della Metafisica degli antichi filosofi contro Giovanni Locke ed alcuni altri moderni autori,' 1732, are sufficient to refute those who represent him as a Cartesian His aim as a philosopher was to apply the general doctrine of Plato, somewhat amended in substance and form, and what in ancient wisdom harmonised therewith, to the elucidation of modern problems and the exposure of modern errors As to Platonism, he and Vico were almost at one As to Cartesianism, they differed more, but it was in degree of opposition. Doria was a clear and vigorous thinker and writer He was better acquainted than Vico with mathematical and physical science, and had a more practical knowledge of men and affairs. He was also superior to him as a controversialist His 'Difesa' is the ablest criticism of Locke which appeared until the publication of the 'Nouveaux Essais' of Leibniz, whereas Vico's replies to his reviewers are inartistic and unskilful productions He wanted, however, Vico's originality and profundity He had certainly more to learn from him than to teach him. But it must not be supposed that he was his disciple Before he knew Vico he had made choice of the philosophy to which he adhered to the end of his life His relation to Vico was not that of a disciple to a master, but of an appreciative patron to a philosophical friend, whose principles and doctrines agreed in the main with those to which he had himself independently come

Very different estimates have been formed of the worth of Vico's metaphysical treatise Not a few

Italian authors of this century have assigned to it an altogether extravagant value They have described it as a singularly profound and precious work,—one of epoch-making importance, in which were laid for the first time the foundations of the only modern philosophy which can combine and reconcile idealism and realism, and displace and overcome rationalism, empiricism, and scepticism To any but an Italian reader this representation must at first seem inexplicable And, in fact, an explanation of it is not to be found in the book itself, but in the condition of the Italian spirit during the nineteenth century The recent political resurrection of Italy sprang from a revival of the whole national life, in which philosophy largely participated and to which it largely contributed. The conviction that a restored and perfected Italian philosophy would be found the highest and completest expression of truth underlies the idealism of Rosmini, and still more the ontologism of Gioberti and Mamiani, and has during the last fifty years possessed and swayed a multitude of Italian minds. Aspiration and effort after a national future have been accompanied by a reverent appreciation of whatever seemed national in the past, which has led the thinkers of Italy during the last half-century to give due honour, and sometimes excessive honour, to those who in former ages shed glory on their land by their speculative courage or power, and especially to those martyrs of philosophy who had been neglected or persecuted, starved or slain, by their unworthy contemporaries No reputation has been more affected by this disposition than that of Vico He was undoubtedly a precursor of those who would have speculative phil-

osophy to be Italian The position which they have taken up is just that which he took up in the treatise under consideration. This circumstance, together with his real greatness in the sphere of historical philosophy, his opposition to foreign modes of thought, and the general character and tendencies of his own positive principles, have led to his being honoured as the most Italian of Italian philosophers, and to a strong desire on the part of many Italian authors not only to have Vico on their side, but to find the profoundest wisdom in passages of his writings where the ordinary, and especially the foreign intellect, can perceive little or none. The wish to discover in him the founder of the true metaphysics has been, to a large extent, the father of the thought that he was so The illusion has been favoured by the brief and obscure character of many of his utterances in the Metaphysics. And professedly "philosophical" interpreters, like Gioberti and Siciliani, have shown great ingenuity in reading into these utterances subtle and abstruse significations, and remarkable self-denial in crediting Vico with ideas to which they had themselves a much better claim.

Excessive laudation is apt to evoke excessive depreciation, and hence there are now even in Italy not a few who deny to our author any merits as a metaphysician. The Hegelians and the Positivists of the peninsula speak, in general, with undisguised contempt of his speculative views Many of them betray towards him, in his strictly philosophical capacity, not only a lack of due appreciation, but a positive aversion. With this state of feeling I have no sympathy Nor can I assent to the sentence pronounced on the Metaphysics by a writer so

eminently characterised by impartiality and moderation of judgment as Cantoni, when he declares it "a strange anomaly in the history of Vico's thought, contrary to all his scientific life, to all his tendencies, to the principles and the method which he afterwards applied, as it were unconsciously, to his historical researches." This is too severe. Vico may have maintained some opinions in this treatise which cannot be reconciled with those which he has elsewhere expressed, but it is going much beyond the mark to describe the treatise itself as a mere anomaly. Most of its positions are clearly connected with the general principles in the Orations, and still more with doctrines in Vico's later writings. It is not, in my opinion, a treatise of very high importance; but neither is it a mere intellectual abortion, a meaningless prodigy, the product of an utterly useless originality. I can see little in it that is anomalous.

The notion of finding a philosophy in the roots and phrases of the Latin speech may appear directly contrary to one of the fundamental doctrines of the New Science—namely, that language originated with men who had only rude, sensuous, and simple apprehensions. Bacon, in the 'De Sapientia Veterum,' proceeded on the hypothesis that the fables or myths preserved in Homer and Hesiod were relics from wiser and better times,—traditions invented in an age of deeper knowledge to set forth in allegory important physical and moral lessons. This belief in a primeval wisdom was prevalent in Bacon's time, and even in our own day has a most able and scholarly advocate in Mr Gladstone. Vico, in his later works, did more perhaps to undermine it than any previous thinker. He displaced it by

genuinely scientific truth of great psychological and historical interest. That primeval wisdom was popular, not profound; poetical, and not philosophical, practical, and not theoretical,—was one of the chief pillars of his science of history. It was because of their connection with it that he attached so much importance to his investigations and conclusions relative to Homer and the Laws of the Twelve Tables. The whole structure of his New Science stands or falls with it. Yet in the 'De Sapientia Italorum' he is seen striving to deduce, from the relics of a philosophical culture which had fashioned and shaped Latin speech at the dawn of its existence, a complete system of metaphysical truth. If he had delayed writing on metaphysics until a few years later, one can scarcely suppose that he would have placed himself at this point of view; although, after once occupying it, he never abandoned it. An exception, however, is not a contradiction, and Vico, it must be admitted, treated Latin as an exception. His reasons for doing so were of a purely historical nature. They were, that the Romans until the time of Pyrrhus had given attention only to war and agriculture,—that before the age of Hadrian such words as *ens essentia*, *substantia*, *accidens*, &c., were unknown to them,—and yet that they employed words of a far more ancient date, which, on examination, were found to imply ideas quite as subtle and profound as those expressed in the words which had been devised to translate Aristotle. Whence, he asked himself, had these old original words come? He answered that they must have come from a people or peoples more learned than the Romans; and that the only two peoples whom history will allow us to believe to have stood in a tutorial relation to the Romans were

the Ionians and the Etruscans, who were cultured communities distinguished for wisdom, possessed of just ideas of the Divinity, versed in geometry, skilled in architecture, &c., while the Romans were still rude and ignorant. His reasoning was not much at fault; but he erred fatally as to one of his alleged facts, the existence of such very ancient and yet profoundly philosophical terms as he held to be contained in the Latin language. Philological analysis does not prove this, and Vico only supposed it did, because he unconsciously read into certain Latin words conceptions of his own. He did not imagine that the Romans were themselves aware of the original and latent signification of these words; on the contrary, he fancied that they used them just in the same way that unlearned persons in his own day spoke of *essences* and *substances*, *sympathies* and *antipathies*, *humours* and *qualities*, &c.

Further, the error into which Vico fell was one capable of becoming a stepping-stone towards truth, and did in his case become so. The speculative thought which he sought for in the roots of the Latin language he did not find, because no such thought was really in them; yet his search, while directly a failure, was indirectly a success. As Columbus in seeking for India found America, so Vico was led on by his illusion regarding the philosophy in Latin to his discovery of the true character of the thought in which language must have originated. If he had not begun with the hope of finding abstruse and speculative ideas in the roots of speech, he would probably never have arrived at that marvellous insight into the real nature of "primitive wisdom" which constitutes one of his greatest claims to remembrance and recognition in the history of science.

II THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

The first question discussed by Vico in his Metaphysics is the very important one as to the nature and criterion of knowledge He begins by affirming that among the Romans *verum* and *factum* were convertible terms He defines *intelligere, cogitare,* and *ratio,* according to what he supposes to have been their ancient Latin usage He understands *intelligence* to have meant thorough comprehension, a complete and evident reading and knowing of the nature of a thing "As words are the signs and symbols of ideas, so are ideas of things, and therefore, *as to read (legere)* is to combine the written elements of which words are com[illegible]ed, *so to know by the faculty of intelligence (intellig*[illegible] [illegible]ll the elements of a thing from which is derived its absolutely perfect idea." He supposes that *cogitation* was understood to be a lower kind of thought, implying hesitation and reflection, defect and dubiety—*cogitare* being equivalent to the Italian *pensare* or *andar raccogliendo* He represents *ratio* as having signified both the connecting of numerical elements and the endowment by which man is distinguished from beast. As an endowment, man is participant in it, but not possessed of it Vico proceeds to state his doctrine in words which it seems necessary to translate —

"From what has been said, we may infer that the ancient sages of Italy entertained the following views regarding truth Truth is simply fact, what is made In God there is the first truth, because He is the first maker (factor), infinite truth, because He is the maker of all things, abso-

lutely accurate truth, because He has present to Himself all the elements, both external and internal, of things, seeing that He contains them To know (*scire*) is to combine the elements of things, and thence it follows that thought (*cogitatio*) belongs to the human mind, but intelligence to the divine mind , for God keeps before Him all the elements, whether external or internal, of things, because He contains them and disposes of them But the human mind, because it is limited, and because, as to all things external to and apart from itself, it can only reach their outward conditions, never can combine all the elements of things, and so, although it can think of things, it cannot intellectually comprehend them , wherefore the human mind participates in reason, but does not possess it I may illustrate these statements by a comparison Divine truth is a solid image of things, as it were a moulded figure or statue , human truth is a linear sketch, a plane image, like a picture and just as divine truth is what God in the act of knowing disposes of and produces, so human truth is what man in knowing composes and makes Thus science is the knowledge of the form or of the mode in which a thing is produced, and by which the mind, because in knowing a thing it combines its elements, makes the thing,—God the solid whole, because He comprehends all elements , man a plane, because he comprehends only externals. In order that what has thus been laid down may be reconciled the more readily with our religion, it must be observed that the ancient Italian philosophers regarded truth and fact as convertible, because they deemed the world eternal,—a supposition which caused the heathen philosophers to worship a God who always operated from without, but which is one that our theology rejects. Therefore in our religion, in which we profess that the world was created out of nothing in time, this distinction must be drawn in the matter—namely, *that created truth is equivalent to made, but uncreated truth to generated* Accordingly the sacred Scriptures, with a nicety of expression truly divine, call the wisdom of God, in which are contained the ideas of

all things, and therefore the elements of all ideas, the *Word;* seeing that in it truth is identical with the comprehension of all the elements which compose the universe, and which might, if willed, constitute countless worlds, and that the real and absolutely perfect word which comes forth from these elements, known and embraced within its own omnipotence, inasmuch as from eternity known by the Father, is likewise from eternity generated by Him."[1]

The doctrine thus stated enables us, according to Vico, to ascend to the origin of human science, and yields us a rule by which we may recognise what is truly science.

"God knows all things, because He contains in Himself the elements of which He composes all things, but man, in endeavouring to know things, must have recourse to dividing them Therefore, human science is a kind of anatomy of the works of nature Thus, to illustrate this by examples, it has dissected man into body and soul, and soul into intellect and will, and it has selected, or, as it is termed, abstracted from the body figure and movement, and from these, as from all other things, it has drawn being and unity Metaphysics considers being, Arithmetic the unit and its multiplication, Geometry figure and its dimensions, Mechanics motion from without, Physics motion from the centre, Medicine the body, Logic reason, and Moral Science the will."[2]

But the anatomy of science, like the anatomy practised by physicians on the animal body, alters, decreases, and injures its objects. Things divided are, as is indicated by the Latin word *minuere*, things diminished. Being, unity, figure, movement, body, intellect, will, are altogether different in God, in whom they are one, from what they are in man, in whom they are divided. They are living and absolute in God, dead and unreal in man

[1] Opere, vol. ii. pp 63, 64 [2] Ibid., vol. ii. p 64.

God, as He has Himself declared, as Plato divined, and as Christian saints and sages have proclaimed, is the one true Being, of whom are all things, and before whom everything else is as nothing. He alone truly and absolutely knows. But neither by the syllogistic, nor algebraical, nor experimental methods can man attain to a knowledge of things, for he has not in himself the elements of which things are formed. Yet this defect of the human mind is the very source of human science. Man turns it to his advantage. He creates by abstraction *the point and the unit*, and out of these two creations—which are both fictions of reason, not real entities—he proceeds to form lines, surfaces, numbers, &c., which he can prolong, connect, combine, multiply, and divide *ad libitum*. Thus he produces an infinity of things, seeing that he knows in himself an infinity of truths. The science of mathematics is, consequently, not mere contemplation or theory, but a mental product, a true creation of the human spirit: it is a creation, however, by abstraction and definition, without matter,—a creation not, like that of God, from real elements, but only from nominal elements. Inasmuch as it is a creation, it is also a science. As the vain pursuit of the alchemist, therefore, has given rise to the useful art of chemistry, so the striving of human curiosity to obtain truth inaccessible to it has produced two most serviceable sciences, arithmetic and geometry, on which depend mechanics and its applications.

Relying on the above considerations, Vico lays down his criterion of truth in the following passage:—

"Seeing that human science is born of a defect of the mind—namely, of its extreme littleness—in consequence of

which it is external to all things, contains nothing of what it desires to know, and so cannot produce the truth which it seeks to ascertain, those sciences are the most certain which expiate the defect in which they originate, and which resemble divine science by the creative activity which they involve. From the whole of the preceding discussion, we may accordingly conclude that the criterion of truth, the rule by which we may certainly know it, is *to have made it* Hence the clear and distinct idea of our mind not only cannot be the criterion of truth in general, but not even of that of the mind itself, for while the mind apprehends itself, it does not make itself, and because it does not make itself it is ignorant of the form or mode in which it apprehends itself. Since human science owes its existence to abstraction, the more the sciences are immersed in corporeal matter the less certainty have they Thus mechanics is less certain than geometry and arithmetic, because it treats of motion, and of motion effectuated in and through machines. Physics is less certain than mechanics, because it treats of the internal motion of centres, while mechanics treats of the external motion of circumferences. And morals is still less certain than physics, because while the latter considers the internal motions of bodies, which belong to nature which is fixed and definite, the former investigates the motions of souls—motions the most abstruse, and which have their source largely in wilfulness, which is unlimited. Besides, the things which are proved in physics are those to which we can perform something similar, and the views as to natural things which are universally received with the greatest admiration and approval are those to the support of which we can bring experiments by which we so far imitate nature."[1]

The criterion of truth, then, according to Vico, is the convertibility of truth with fact understood in its etymological acceptation—*i.e.*, as equivalent to what is made or effected. This convertibility of truth with fact sup-

[1] Opere, vol. ii pp 67, 68

poses that truth depends on the mind which knows it, and that there can be perfect knowledge only where there is absolute creative power Knowledge may be power, but it has also its source in power, if the limits of power correspond to those of knowledge, it is because the measure of power determines the possible extent of knowledge

Vico proceeds to indicate how the criterion may be applied to refute both dogmatism and scepticism in philosophy. He takes Descartes as the typical modern dogmatist That philosopher professed to reach science through scepticism. He held that by pushing doubt as far as possible he found the limit of doubt, and arrived at an indubitable truth, whence he was able, step by step, to overcome and dispel doubt When he had resolutely withdrawn belief from all that seemed to be data of sense or conclusions of science, had supposed that memory might constantly deceive him, and that his mathematical demonstrations might be always erroneous, and had imagined that there was neither God nor earth nor sky,—one thing still remained which he could not doubt, for doubt itself involved it—namely, that he was while he doubted. He could not think away his own existence, for he could not think that he was not existing at the time when he was thinking Therefore, the *Cogito, ergo sum*, seemed to Descartes the first absolutely indubitable truth, the type of all truth, and the ultimate foundation of science. Vico denies alike that scepticism can be thus refuted and that dogmatism can be rested on such a basis. He admits that no man can either doubt that he thinks or that he exists while he thinks, but holds that the sceptic doubts neither position, and that

to affirm them has no relevancy against scepticism. The sceptic is perfectly conscious both of his thought and of his existence. Merely to be conscious, however, is, according to Vico, not properly speaking *to know* (*scire*) All knowledge is of the nature of science (*scientia*),—is an insight into what things are, into their causes, and into the manner in which they arise, not a mere feeling or apprehension that they are But consciousness (*conscientia*) is not science (*scientia*),—is not what is alone entitled to be called knowledge, and what alone sceptics mean by knowledge when they pronounce it unattainable. Hence, argues Vico, the sceptic is entitled to hold that, although conscious of his thought, he does not know it, since he is ignorant of how and why he thinks, and that, although conscious of existing while he thinks, he does not know his existence, since his thought is in no way the cause or explanation of his existence

"A sceptic will deny that the knowledge of being can be obtained from the consciousness of thinking For to know, he insists, is to be acquainted with the causes from which things are produced; but I who think am mind and body, and if thought were the cause why I am it would be the cause of body, yet bodies are things which do not think. It is just because I consist of body and mind that I think, so that body and mind in union are the cause of thought, for if I were body alone I should not think, and if I were mind alone I should apprehend by pure intellection. That I think is not the cause but the sign of my being a mind, and a sign is not a cause. A sceptic of sense and discretion will not deny the certainty of signs, but he will deny the certainty of causes"[1]

Scepticism can only be refuted, according to Vico, by

[1] Opere, vol ii. pp 70, 71

means of the principle that the criterion of truth is to have made it This principle, he considers, leads directly to the conclusion that God, comprehending in Himself all causes, is the first truth,—the truth in which all other truths are contained, and by which all human truth must be measured

The reader has thus had laid before him Vico's doctrine of the criterion of truth. As explanation and criticism have been deliberately excluded from the general statement of it in the preceding pages, some aid, in the form of observations calculated to facilitate its comprehension and appreciation, may now probably be not unreasonably looked for It will not be denied to stand in considerable need of elucidation. What it precisely means and implies is not obvious It is obscurely presented and imperfectly developed, terms are employed and distinctions drawn in unusual ways, apt to occasion misapprehension, and apparently inconsistent propositions are maintained. In any form of statement, perhaps, it would seem somewhat peculiar and strange. Whatever the theory may be, it is not of a commonplace character, true or false, it is not one which an ordinary mind would originate It occurred to no thinker before Vico, and rests on a bold and singular conception, which could only have suggested itself to a man who looked at philosophical problems altogether in a way of his own At the same time, it is no mere speculative phantom or monstrosity There is a considerable amount of light in the doctrine, although far from enough to illumine the whole subject to which it relates It points to conditions or characteristics of truth and knowledge which cannot be too closely studied.

Now, one fact essential to be borne in mind is, that Vico uses the terms truth and knowledge in a way of his own, and that he lays down his criterion of truth (*veri criterium ac regulam ipsum esse fecisse*) as applicable to truth and knowledge only in the peculiar senses in which he employs these terms. Truth and knowledge are for Vico coextensive and convertible terms. What is true to us is all that we know. What we know is all that is true to us. There is no human truth outside of human knowledge, just as there is no divine truth outside of divine knowledge. There is no unknown truth. If there were, there would be unmade or ungenerated truth, and the criterion would not apply. The truth is what is known; to be known it must be made: the knowing and the making of truth are inseparable. It obviously follows from this view that truth and knowledge, so far as man is concerned, must be confined within very narrow limits. And we have seen that Vico does assign to them very narrow limits. We must not infer from this, however, that he rejects as untrue or unknown, in any other sense than his own, what lies beyond these limits, and is designated in ordinary language as truth and knowledge. We *do not know* that we think or that we exist, but we *are conscious* of thinking and existing; it is *not true* that we think or that we exist, but it is *certain* that we both think and exist: these statements of Vico show merely that he chose to use the term knowledge as exclusive of consciousness, whereas it is commonly understood as inclusive of it; and to regard certainty as distinct from and co-ordinate with truth, instead of as inseparable from and correlative to it. He denies that we know God, or that to us the existence of

God is a truth, on the ground that "those who desire to prove *a priori* the existence of Almighty and All-gracious God are guilty of an impious curiosity They virtually attempt to make themselves the God of God, and deny the God whom they seek" (Opere, vol ii. p 77) Far from doubting, however, the existence of God, he regards God as the first truth and the source of all knowledge The more he restricts the sphere of truth the more he widens that of certainty, and to the sphere of certainty he relegates all truths which he deems incapable of demonstrative proof, but which he believes are to be accepted on the authority of the individual or the common consciousness of divine or human testimony Thus, while he represents the domain of truth or knowledge constituted by man's reason as indeed small, he also exhibits it as surrounded by a vast region of belief or persuasion attested by some authority whose dictates are entitled to acceptance and obedience His certainties are therefore, from one point of view, just truths to which what he calls the criterion of truth does not apply, and for which he finds other criteria in consciousness and common-sense For all kinds of truth, in the ordinary acceptation of the word, he has laid down no one criterion, he merely conformed his conception of truth to what may be a criterion of a kind of truth. It must in justice be added, however, that what he failed to do no other philosopher has succeeded in doing, and that the majority of those who have pondered on the subject have come to the conclusion that there is no one absolute criterion of truth

It was impossible for Vico to recognise exclusively and adhere consistently to such a distinction between

truth and certainty as the one which he laid at the basis of his theory of the criterion of knowledge To have done so, he would have required entirely to disregard the common thought and speech of mankind The languages of the world show that human reason has everywhere felt constrained to distinguish between truth and certainty in an altogether different way. It has universally viewed truth and certainty as being, not co-ordinate and mutually exclusive, but correlative and mutually implicative It has merely distinguished them as objective from subjective, as state of fact from state of mind Hence either may be predicated of the other, and neither answers to its idea when divorced from the other Truth may be certain or uncertain to us, but truth of which we are certain is just truth which we know, and truth of which we are uncertain is just truth which we do not know, to be truth. Our persuasion of certainty may be true or false, but is always a persuasion of truth. We may feel certain of what is false, but to feel certain is firmly to believe a thing to be true, and to be certain is to know it to be true There is no truth which in itself is uncertain, and no certainty which in itself is untrue Science, instead of presupposing the separation of truths from certainties, aims in all its departments at *knowing truth with certainty* Vico could not fail to perceive that there was thus another way of distinguishing truth from certainty than that which he adopted in the Metaphysics, and that it was one which was perfectly legitimate, and even indispensable. This did not lead him, however, to abandon his own peculiar mode of distinguishing them, but to combine the two distinctions, notwithstanding their radical inconsistency

The immediate result was, of course, confusion, but it is interesting to observe how in this, as in many other cases, the mind of Vico, instead of being submerged in chaos, worked its way to a vision and grasp of a grand aspect or law of the social cosmos By brooding over the commingled truths and errors which have been indicated, it brought forth the idea of a general development of human thought from consciousness to science, from authority to reason,—of a moral world gradually made by man, under the guidance of Providence. In the 'De uno jurisprudentis,' &c, and in the second 'Scienza Nuova,' we see clearly how this result was reached Thus, in the first-named treatise we are told that truth is the conformity of the mind to the order of things, and certainty is a consciousness free from doubt; that the contraries of *vera* are *falsa,* and the contraries of *certa* are *dubia,* that things certain may be false, and things true may be doubtful, that whereas truth is the work of reason, certainty springs from authority, yet that there is a true and a false persuasion of certainty, while authority itself participates in reason, or is even a part of reason (*auctoritas pars rationis*), and that the course of jurisprudence is one which tends, on the whole, from the certain to the true — (Opere, vol. iii. pp 15, 16, 53, 55-58, 72, &c.) In the second 'Scienza Nuova' he returns to the subject, and views it in the full light of his philosophy of history. The following is the substance of what he states Those who cannot attain to the truth of things may attain to a certainty about them; when unable to satisfy their intelligence by knowledge, they may make their will repose on consciousness The true and the certain may be

combined and harmonised, and the greatest of the sciences is that in which this is accomplished,—the science which results from the concurrent action of philosophy and philology Philosophy and philology embrace the whole of man's intellectual acquisitions Philosophy is the science of the absolute and immutable; philology, which includes literature and history, is certainty as to the relative and temporary The former deals with the ideas which are the objects of reason, the latter with the facts which are produced by the human will. History is a rational process which begins with the certain separated from the true, and ends with the true united to the certain. It can be explained neither by a geometrical method on the one hand, nor an empirical on the other, but only by the co-operation of a philosophy which duly regards facts with a philology which duly regards ideas.—(Opere, vol. v. pp 97, 98, 147, 148, 535, &c)

The theory of a criterion of knowledge given by Vico in his Metaphysics, it must also be observed, directs attention, in a striking and unusual way, to the connection between truth and mind. It implies that truth so depends on mind, that what is central and substantial in all truth belongs to the mind itself. It is opposed to all views of truth which represent it as existent apart from mind, or as realisable otherwise than by being akin and congenerous to mind. Truth, according to Vico, does not lie in purely objective things or relations—*i e.*, in things or relations which, prior to and apart from all thought concerning them, possess the properties or characteristics which the mind comes to find by thought that it must attribute to them. There are, in his view, no

things or relations thus purely objective, no truth thus absolute, no world which can be an object where there is no subject, no truth which is true to no mind. The sphere of truth is represented by him to be that of such experience as the mind itself has actively produced. His Metaphysics restricts science to experience as its only legitimate field not less rigidly than does Kant's Criticism, and even assigns to it narrower limits in laying greater stress on the power of mind to originate and evolve its own experience. With all his venturesomeness in speculation, he had no belief in *noumena* essentially inaccessible to intellect. And although he did not limit the province of human science to the data of sense, he restricted it to those which had their whole being in and from the mind. Hence he represented mathematics as, strictly speaking, man's only science. In mathematics the process of human knowledge is in an eminent, and almost exclusive sense, a process of production; in this ideal region the mind possesses a constructive and creative power vastly greater than in the real world; it can form for itself, by abstraction and definition, the few simple elementary conceptions which are postulated by geometry, arithmetic, algebra, &c., and can, then, by its own purely intellectual action, so combine and dispose these conceptions as to form innumerable truths. Accordingly, instead of attributing, as Descartes did, the superiority of mathematical over other knowledge to the greater clearness and distinctness of the successive steps of mathematical demonstration, Vico deemed it of much more importance to refer the clearness and distinctness of mathematical demonstration to its being entirely the mind's own work. The mind

knows what itself does, and in mathematics the mind does everything. Mathematical truth being the only truth which the mind of man wholly makes, is the only truth which that mind perfectly knows, or knows in essentially the same way as the Divine Mind knows all truth. Mathematical truth, indeed, is not known by the human mind in a pure and infinite act of intellection, which is proper and possible only to a pure and infinite spirit, but it is known by it in an all-penetrative, all-comprehensive manner, as precisely what it is; and it is thus known because it is precisely what the mind which knows it has made it to be. Hence, in the knowledge of mathematical truth, the human mind has knowledge of a type which corresponds to the archetypal knowledge of the Divine Mind. This latter knowledge is a perfect knowledge of all truth, there being nothing beyond, independent of, or unproduced by, God. He is the one sole being, of which all creatures are but states (*disposizioni*) (Opere, vol. ii. p. 65); the absolute unity which comprehends all individual existences, yet is in itself simple and indivisible being (vol. ii. pp. 65, 127, 128); the unextended source of extension and unmoved universal mover (vol. ii. p. 81); the infinite mind, which so dwells and works in all finite minds as to make in them the truth which they know in it (vol. ii. pp. 95, 96); the first and final cause, which contains within itself the elements of all things and produces all things, the world by creation and the world by generation (vol. ii. pp. 63, 64).

It has often been urged, as a fatal objection to the preceding doctrine, that if truth be made it must be something temporary and arbitrary. But Vico distinctly held that *all the truths of science—all the truths which are made—*

are eternal and immutable (vol. ii p 78, vol. iii p 21) Man makes mathematical truth, but in doing so he only makes, in and through God, truth which God has eternally made All finite thinking is included in, and only possible through, infinite thought Then, the nature of the effect is already given in that of the cause. But the cause in the case of truth is not arbitrary will in God or man, but reason—the productive activity of reason. This is, perhaps, overlooked by those who urge the objection that the mind cannot be said to make even mathematical truth, because it does not make those laws of thought which are presupposed in mathematical and all other reasoning "The understanding," says the Spanish philosopher Balmes, "knows what it makes, but this is not all that it knows, for it has truths which neither are nor can be its works, since they are the basis of all its works—as, for example, the principle of contradiction. Can the impossibility of a thing being and not being at the same time be said to be the work of our reason? Assuredly not Reason itself is impossible if this principle be not supposed, the understanding finds it in itself as an absolute necessary law, as a condition *sine qua non* of all its acts. Here, then, Vico's criterion fails, 'the understanding knows only the truth it makes,' and yet the understanding knows but does not make the truth of the principle of contradiction "[1] This objection, inasmuch as it affirms that the principle of contradiction is an absolutely necessary law and condition of reason, appears to contain its own refutation For what Vico asserts is, that the reason knows what it

[1] 'Fundamental Philosophy,' translated by H O Brownson, vol i pp 214, 215

makes or does itself, in other words, he postulates reason as the cause—the only cause—which makes truth, and that reason in making truth always remains reason, and acts as reason. But reason does not remain reason, or act as reason, unless it work according to the principles of identity, contradiction, and excluded middle. Necessarily, therefore, in postulating reason as the cause of truth, Vico postulated also these principles. They are among the elements which reason, as the cause of truth, must have within itself. And Vico might well have argued that in their primary form—that in which they are implied in the very existence of reason—they are simply elements or conditions of thought, and not, properly speaking, truths, although there can be no truth without them. The human intellect worked in accordance with them for ages before it expressed and formulated them, but its unconscious obedience to them as laws was not knowledge of them as truths. In their secondary form of truths there seems to be no special reason why they should not be deemed to be made.

Vico's whole theory of knowledge centres in the idea that the working of the finite mind rests on, and is only realised through, the working of the Infinite Mind. Hence he holds that the criterion of truth for the finite mind must be an absolute criterion, essentially characteristic of the Infinite Mind. If man knows because he makes, still more does God know because He makes. The Absolute Maker must be also the Absolute Knower. It has been often objected to this part of the doctrine that, were it true, God must be unable to know Himself, since He has not made Himself. But the objection overlooks that, in the view of Vico, God is the Absolute, and Absolute Thought or Reason. Absolute Thought

or Reason, however, is thought or reason in which knowledge and being coincide,—in which what is known is perfectly realised in its idea If God be Absolute Reason, there can be no nature or self in God prior to, apart from, or independent of, the absolute, self-active, self-productive, self-conscious realisation of reason The objection assumes *that reason merely belongs to God*, while the doctrine against which it is urged, implies, from beginning to end, *that God is Reason* Again, Vico, in affirming that God is the author of truth, cannot be justly charged, as Descartes may, with referring eternal and necessary truths to the operation of a bare, arbitrary, indifferent will in God How self-contradictory and dangerous this tenet of Descartes is, has been amply shown by Cudworth and many other writers. Vico kept clear of it, not only by distinguishing between generation and creation of truth, but by adhering consistently to the idea of God as the Absolute,—as One therefore in whom there can be no arbitrary will, no faculties or attributes disjoined from one another as virtually independent entities, no substance or nature beneath or beyond the comprehension of the Divine Intelligence. It followed from his conception of God as the Absolute, that God is the first truth and the source of all truth, and that truth is not independent of God nor even conceivable apart from Him, but not that truth cannot be eternal and necessary. At the same time, his view of the connection of God with truth is as opposed to the view on which Leibniz based his 'Theodicy' as to the tenet of Descartes which has just been considered. For Leibniz also carried into his idea of God a dualism of will and intelligence irreconcilable with real spiritual unity. He conceived of the Divine Will as essentially separated

from the Divine Intelligence; as a mere power of selecting and realising the truths which, in the form of eternal possibilities, have for ever dwelt in the Infinite Understanding God, according to Leibniz, has an Intelligence in which ideally exist eternally and immutably all possible worlds and all their possible relations—the whole universe of abstract truths; but His Will is entirely separated from His Intelligence Hence the truths in the Divine Intelligence are so many objective limits to the Divine Will, and all that God can do is to choose out of these truths, which he can neither make, unmake, nor modify, those on which He will act; to select out of the infinite number of possible worlds ever present in His phantasy—a phantasy over which He has no control—the one which He sees good actually to create and sustain. Vico's doctrine of truth implies an idea of God which differs from this *toto cœlo* It implies His true absoluteness It implies, in consequence, that He is so One that he cannot be divided into two—an Intelligence and a Will; and so the source of truth that he cannot be passively related to it, as a receptacle, or a spectator, or a subject; but that He must be at once and inseparably all-creative action and all-comprehensive thought, out of which and independent of which there can be neither reality nor truth.

Vico's criterion of knowledge seemed to him involved in the very nature of knowledge. Aristotle had explicitly taught that scientific knowledge was knowledge of causes, and the highest kind of scientific knowledge the knowledge of ultimate causes[1] This doctrine, which had been uncontested in any of the classical or medieval

[1] Metaphysics, Book I, chaps i, ii

schools of philosophy, Vico entirely accepted. *Vere scire est per causas scire*—seemed to him an axiom He did not conceive it possible that there could be any true and thorough knowledge—science—which was not essentially genetic But, like Aristotle and every one else who has undertaken to defend the position that there can be no adequate knowledge where causes are unknown, he had to understand the word cause in a wide sense, inclusive of conditions and principles in general as well as of causes strictly so termed. The cause of a thing is whatever adequately explains it,—the whole ground, reason, or source of it,—*quella che per produrre l'effetto non ha d'altra bisogno* Hence arithmetic and geometry, which are not conversant at all with what are commonly called causes, are pronounced the only sciences which the human mind proves by causes, and consequently the only perfect human sciences Hence also the phrases, "to prove by causes," "to collect the elements of a thing," and "to make," are understood as equivalent *probare per causas idem est ac efficere,—probare a causis est elementa rei colligere.* The making of truth, whether ideal production, as mathematical demonstration by the human mind, or real production, as generation and creation by the Divine Mind, is conceived of as purely intellectual action, although the results may be figures or bodies, it implies the operation of a single cause properly so-called, a Reason adequate to its work, a Reason which contains within it all the *elementa rei*

According to Vico's doctrine of the criterion, knowledge by causes is alone entitled to be called science. Yet he himself is not thus rigorous in the use of the term. On the contrary, even in the 'De Sapientia' he

affirms that metaphysics is "the truest of all the sciences," and that geometry and arithmetic only come next in truth to metaphysics (*post metaphysicam maxime veræ*) At the same time, no one admitted more fully than Vico that our knowledge in Metaphysics is not *by causes*, but merely OF *causes* The rank which he assigns to metaphysics among the sciences is due to its being specially occupied with the cause which is the source of all truth. He denies that this first cause and first truth can be properly or scientifically known, yet terms the belief in it knowledge and science, because the first truth is in its own nature the light of all knowledge and the fountain of all science. Worse still, he often theorises as if the belief were knowledge. Thus he fancies that he has overcome scepticism by a mere reference to that primal truth which he has himself shown cannot be proved so as to be known. On this account his professed refutation of scepticism is almost inconceivably weak. It is as follows —

"There is no other way by which scepticism can be overthrown than by holding that the criterion of truth is to have made it. For the constant contention of sceptics is that things *seem* to them, but that they do not know what they really *are*. They confess effects, and consequently concede causes to them, but they deny that they know these causes, because ignorant of the genera or forms according to which things are made These their own admissions retort against them thus this comprehension of causes in which are contained all the genera and forms according to which effects are produced, and the appearances of which the sceptic admits to be manifest, although he denies that he knows what they are in themselves, is the first truth which comprises all things, and in which all, even to the last, are con-

tained. And because this truth comprises all, it is infinite, for it excludes nothing. For the same reason, it is prior to body, which is only an effect. It is, therefore, something spiritual; that is, it is God, and indeed the God of the Christian. By this standard we must measure human truth, for human truth is that truth the elements of which we have co-ordinated within us, and which, by means of postulates, we may extend and follow to infinity. By co-ordinating these truths we at once know and make them, and hence as regards them we have the genus or form according to which we make."[1]

Criticism is unnecessary. Yet this professed refutation of scepticism is interesting from its very ineffectiveness. It reveals precisely where the radical weakness of Vico's philosophy lay. It was a philosophy which centred in faith in the Absolute. This faith possessed Vico in the same complete and overmastering manner in which it has ruled in Plato, in Bruno, in Spinoza, in Fichte, in Schelling, in Hegel. But the whole history of philosophy testifies that, however legitimate such faith may be, thought has no more difficult task to accomplish than to make evident its legitimacy; than so to reach and apprehend, so to realise and exhibit the Absolute, as rationally to manifest that it is the source and essence of all actuality in existence, and of all truth in intelligence. It is a task which Vico clearly failed to achieve. So far from proving that his faith in the Absolute was justified, the only consistent conclusion to be drawn from his argumentation was that faith in the Absolute must be independent of proof and incapable of justification; that from its very nature the Absolute cannot be known as

[1] Opere, vol. ii. p. 71.

truth: that the human mind cannot ascend in the way of knowledge to any cause higher than itself; that although the Infinite Reason must be in closest communion with finite reason, the latter must be for ever separated from the former by an impassable abyss of impenetrable darkness. A doctrine of which this is the outcome should support scepticism, or at least avoid conflict with it, for it cannot fail to suffer defeat should it attempt to oppose it. If all knowledge runs up into what is utterly unknowable, all knowledge centres in darkness and is self-contradictory from beginning to end. Vico's faith in an Absolute, which is the life of thought and the light of truth in every form, may be admirable in itself; but if so, his theory of cognition not only failed to do it justice, but did it positive and grievous injustice. We may have no little sympathy with his vivid sense of the relativity and narrowness of human knowledge; we may be ready to recognise as a sign of the profundity of his intellect the intensity of his conviction that "if a man think he know anything," which is not the pure creation of his own mind, "he knows nothing yet as he ought to know"; but we must also deeply regret that he made no serious effort to show that human thought, with all its limits and imperfections, has what is absolute in it as well as what is relative, and can, while truly remaining thought and obeying the laws of its own nature, reach a knowledge of the Absolute, because the Absolute is Knowledge and Thought, not the Unknowable, not what is extraneous and alien to Thought.

The Cartesian criterion of truth—clear and distinct perception—is not pronounced by Vico erroneous. On the contrary, he expressly admits that it is valid for such

inferences as the *Cogito, ergo sum* [1] What he maintains is merely that it is insufficient, and requires to be supplemented by a principle at once more profound and more practical. And it can scarcely, I think, be doubted that, as regards at least mathematical demonstration, he has really pointed out an important source of its superior certainty to other kinds of probation. The power of the mind in this sphere to define and construct, largely explains why its reasonings are here so clear and indubitable All that Dugald Stewart has so convincingly stated in proof of the position that the greater certainty of the mathematical sciences depends, not on axioms, but on definitions, amounts to little more than an exposition of that part of the doctrine of Vico which is meant to account for the peculiar certainty of purely ideal truth.[2] Had Stewart known of Vico's speculation, he could not possibly have supposed that he was himself the first to give a satisfactory explanation of the distinctive character of the species of evidence called demonstrative But Vico's doctrine was not, like that of Stewart, simply a statement of the reason of mathematical certainty, but a general theory which, while explaining the difference between mathematical and other evidence, extends and applies to evidence of every kind It is essentially a protest in favour of *verification*, and against an exclusive trust in apparent perception or self-evidence. In physics it is a demand for experimentation. It affirms that the

[1] Rather as *Cogito, ergo existo* Thought, he admits, implies existence, but Being, the essence, he holds, underlies existence, is not to be identified with it, and is not given in consciousness

[2] Stewart's 'Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind,' Pt II, chap i, sect. 1, "Of Mathematical Axioms", and chap ii, sect. 3, "Of Mathematical Demonstration."

mind cannot understand external nature by thought alone, that mere ideas and reasonings will not yield a true knowledge of material things Descartes, holding that the essence of matter was extension, and that all the apparently specific differences of quality in matter were resolvable into differences of combination and of motion in its parts, believed that the universe might be explained *a priori* by mathematical demonstration. It was a grand theory, and has led to splendid results Vico was enabled to do justice to the truth it contained. He saw, however, the truth which it ignored, and which was required to supplement and correct it. He recognised that a knowledge of nature consists mainly of a knowledge of the causation in nature; that, to apprehend natural causes, there must be experience of their effects, and that an adequate experience is only attainable through adding to simple observation that active experimentation by which causes are designedly set in operation, effects multiplied, circumstances varied, and indifferent or accidental accompaniments eliminated, until essential and unchanging sequences and connections are at length reached. Then, as regards moral and spiritual truth, his theory of the criterion signified that such truth is only to be known by practical realisation. It affirmed that a real knowledge of the truth of ethical and religious doctrine is only to be had through experimental evidence It set forth the principle involved in the declaration of the founder of Christianity—"My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me. *If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself*"—as one of universal and supreme scientific significance in the highest sphere to which

human reason can attain It is by this principle, if Vico's theory be correct, that truth and error are to be discriminated in moral and theological science Verifying spiritual truth is, according to his view, only possible through producing or making it within our own experience And certainly the importance of such verification can hardly be exaggerated. The chief reason why ethics and theology are in so backward a state is, that spiritual experience and experimental evidence have not been rigidly enough demanded for their doctrines The measure of their success or failure in the future must mainly depend on the degree in which those who cultivate them feel or forget that no spiritual truth can be certainly known which has not been experimentally realised.

When Vico first laid down his criterion, it seemed to him that human nature was the province which could least of all be brought within the sway of science But he soon outgrew this view His own scientific conquests, which were all in this very province, gradually led him to the conclusion that the world of humanity in its various developments was as proper a subject of science as extension or number, because a world which man had certainly made. This was not to abandon or reject his criterion, as some of his critics have imagined, but it was vastly to extend its application. It was virtually to claim for all psychological disciplines a place within the domain of science Any inconsistency involved in this change of view must be deemed small, while the progress was great It is to be regretted that some critics should have dwelt on the seeming inconsistency and overlooked the real progress

III. COSMOLOGY AND PSYCHOLOGY.

The hypothesis as to the criterion of truth constitutes what is original and distinctive in Vico's theory of knowledge, or rather, perhaps, of scientific knowledge. For the remainder of his theory he was largely indebted to Plato and Aristotle, but gave the credit of much which he owed them to the ancient Italic sages

From Aristotle came the doctrine of causes, which, as already indicated, lies at the foundation of the theory. Science, according to Vico, consists not in knowledge of the essence of a thing, but in knowledge of the manner in which a thing is made—in knowledge of the operation of its causes. To prove truth by causes is to make it. Causes are of the four kinds described by Aristotle. Physics deals chiefly with material and formal causes, ethics with final causes, and metaphysics with the efficient cause. The efficient cause must, however, have within itself all principles of causation in order to be an adequate explanation of existence and knowledge

With the Aristotelian doctrine of causes our philosopher blended a partially Platonic doctrine of *genera* or *ideas*. His vague and obscure exposition of this doctrine is professedly based on the assumption that in Latin *genus* meant *form*, and *species* either *appearance* or (in the language of the schools) *individual* Of course, in this he was utterly mistaken. The error, like not a few others of the same kind, only proves that he had been somewhat rash when he resolved to dispense with the aid of any Latin lexicon. He rejected the *genera* of the Aristotelians,—the "universals" reached by reflective

thought through comparison and abstraction He dwelt on their disadvantages, pronouncing them the causes of the disputes in philosophy, medicine, jurisprudence, and even practical life. General notions are, according to his representation, confused notions, and general terms ambiguous terms. What is merely general is false The truth is what is completely determinate It does not seem to have occurred to our philosopher to inquire whether or not he was entitled to treat at all of Aristotelian *genera*, after having identified species with individuals, and he made no endeavour to explain how we may dispense with abstract notions and general terms, whatever dangers the use of them may involve He has even described the "ideas," in favour of which "universals" are rejected, in a way which implies that they are themselves universals of an especially vague character, and as regards these universals the position that truth is the determinate is abandoned.[1] While discarding genera as universals, he retained them as forms or ideas In this sense they are affirmed to be the prototypes of which species or particular things are the images, to be infinitely perfect, and therefore necessarily in God alone, to be, when completely possessed, the media by which God creates existences absolutely, and when imperfectly apprehended, to be the media by which man makes truth hypothetically, to be metaphysical forms, and therefore to differ from

[1] Compare the statement, "Quæ genere constant, falsa sint, veræ autem, ultimæ rerum species" (Opere, vol ii p 75), with the following "Atque hoc differt inter materiam physicam et metaphysicam Physica materia ideo quamlibet formam peculiarem educat, educit optimam, quia qua via educit, ea ex omnibus una erat. Materia autem metaphysica, quia peculiares formæ omnes sunt imperfectæ, genere ipso, sive idea, continet optimam" (vol, ii. p 74)

physical forms as plastic forms differ from seminal forms, or, in other words, as ideals or models differ from germinal principles which are only perfected by development, and further, to be indivisible in themselves, and connected and comprehended in the infinite and ultimate source of all forms Vico has not dwelt on any of these points, hence we need not His doctrine at this stage was just the Platonic theory of ideas as transmitted and shaped by scholastic tradition, and it was presented in a vague and loose way little calculated to produce conviction

Our author recovers his originality at the next stage. He proceeds to endeavour to explain, as he was bound to do, how ideas are related to things, and especially how the infinite principle of ideas is related to the data of sense, or, in theological terms, how God has produced nature, and how nature is explicable by reference to God There seems to stretch a vast abyss between the One Absolute Being and the multitude of relative existences which compose what is called nature Between the finite things which sense apprehends and the Infinite to which reason aspires there apparently lies a chasm which reason cannot pass, and by the sight of which it may well be confounded, for it abruptly limits the domain of reason, and makes the universe as a whole not an object of reason, but a something essentially unintelligible How is this apparent breach of the principle of continuity to be filled up or bridged over? How can the One be the source and explanation of the many? This was regarded by Vico as one of the greatest problems of philosophy, and from an early period of his life he earnestly sought its solution. How did he come to what he deemed its solution?

points, either divisible or indivisible. To him what was indivisible was necessarily not points but Being itself, in which there could be no points, no parts He was the follower of Parmenides, and his originality lay in his mode of defending the philosophy of Parmenides, or, in other words, in the dialectic by which, from the admission of the hypothesis of its opponents,—the adherents of other philosophies, empiricists, common-sense and commonplace people of all kinds,—he inferred apparently inevitable and undeniable absurdities But what Parmenides expressly taught, and most consistently taught, was that Being, the One, was at once continuous and indivisible continuous, as nothing physically extended can be but in the sènse that Being is everywhere like to itself, everywhere alike present,—that there is nothing either scattered or gathered together in it, but Being so clings to Being that all is in contact with all, and all is full because all is one, and there is nowhere vacuum, which would imply not-Being, which cannot be , and indivisible, because otherwise Being must be composed of distinct parts, and hence there is plurality in Being, and Being is not one, nay, Being ceases to be Being, according to Parmenides, cannot be multiple, for the differences of Being must be something distinct from Being; but what is distinct from Being is not-Being, and not-Being is not , therefore differences are not , therefore plurality, of which differences are the condition, is not , therefore multiplicity, divisibility, and the parts or points which it implies, are not. Parmenides was quite explicit in his teaching to this effect And Zeno of Elea was a thorough Parmenidean. It was thus only through a series of historical misconceptions that Vico was led to

imagine that this Zeno had propounded the doctrine of metaphysical points. But the conclusion thus arrived at was none the less influential from being based on mere blunders It was the suggestion and germ of the theory, which might, perhaps, never have become his own if he had not fancied it to be in part another's

It was chiefly, however, through dissatisfaction with the prevalent solutions of the problem of creation, that he was led to that which he adopted He convinced himself that those solutions sacrificed unity to plurality, or plurality to unity, or failed to exhibit a rational relationship between them. He wished to sacrifice neither, and at the same time to make it rationally manifest that plurality was dependent on unity, the phenomenal on the absolute. Hence he could not acquiesce in a bare exclusive monism such as Parmenides had expounded, —such as Zeno of Elea had, in reality, contended for It identified all sensible and concrete existence with not-Being, and then calmly affirmed, as the sum and substance of all truth, "Being is, and cannot but be, not-Being is not, and cannot be" He could as little acquiesce in materialism or a merely mechanical explanation of the universe Materialism sacrifices unity to plurality Physical science is an exposition of the laws which material things obey, but does not account for material things or their laws His great objection to the Cartesian system of physics was, that it gave itself out for metaphysics. He allowed that it had great merits, regarded merely as a physics, but deemed them more than counterbalanced by its pretensions to be a metaphysics. "Give me extension and motion," said Descartes, "and I will construct the

"Neither can be given," replied Vico, "for both need to be themselves explained, what you ask to account for, the formation of the world, is a world already formed" He held that all that was physical depended on what was metaphysical, that nothing physical could be substituted for anything metaphysical, and that extension and motion belonged wholly to physics Aristotle, he believed, had erred in a way contrary to Descartes He had substituted metaphysics for physics, set metaphysical principles to do the work of physical ones, attributed to material things metaphysical attributes,—energies, faculties, potentialities, &c He had further favoured the belief in an external creation,—in a distinction of substance between Creator and creature,—in an eternal matter, out of which Deity merely formed individual things, as a potter moulds vessels of many kinds out of the same sort of clay This was in the eyes of Vico a very grave fault For the belief indicated seemed to him to involve an unworthy conception of God, to render the unity which reason demanded unattainable, to raise a barrier between the human and the divine mind which could never be passed, and even to leave morality without the sure basis of a law at once divine and natural. Hence he affirmed that no civilisation could permanently endure which rested on Aristotelianism

His theory of metaphysical points, however, had obviously a third source. If not originated, it was favoured and confirmed by his doctrine as to the nature and criterion of knowledge When knowledge had been conceived of as a sort of making, it was natural that making should be conceived of as somewhat like to

knowing If mathematics were a human creation, divine creation might well be supposed to resemble it Hence one reason for Vico's affirmation that the world originated in metaphysical points The analogy of mathematics seemed to him to warrant it. Like Plato, he deemed that mathematical objects lay between physical things and metaphysical ideas, and were of an intermediate nature. Those, therefore, he thought, who would attain to metaphysical cognition must pass from sense upwards through mathematical cognition, in the very nature of which lies the key to the mystery of creation.

What, however, was Vico's theory of metaphysical points? It may be thus stated —

(*a*) These points belong not to the phenomenal but to the intelligible world—where all is immutable and eternal. They are objects of pure thought—devoid of the properties which sense apprehends or which imagination bodies forth They are closely akin to the *numerical elements* of the Pythagoreans, the *being* of the Eleatics, the ideas of the Platonists, &c In a word, they are rightly termed *metaphysical*

(*b*) At the same time, they are real in themselves and objective as regards finite minds In this respect they are unlike mathematical points, which are abstractions —the notional elements of a notional world Metaphysical points are the real elements of the real world

(*c*) The analogy of metaphysical to mathematical points lies in the likeness of the relationship between themselves and their products—the worlds generated by or from them. As the mathematical point has no length, breadth, or form, yet is the origin of lines, surfaces, and

figures, so the metaphysical point, although unextended, produces extension, and, although immobile, produces motion. Plainly the analogy requires us to suppose that the so-called mathematical point is, strictly speaking, *metamathematical, just as the point which generates physical things is metaphysical* Vico virtually affirms it to be so, by maintaining that geometry and arithmetic are rooted in metaphysics, and derive from thence what he calls their "virtues" or "virtualities" (*virtutes*) "Geometry takes from metaphysics the virtue of extension, which, because the virtue of extension, is prior to extension, and consequently unextended. In like manner, arithmetic takes from metaphysics the virtue of number, namely the unit, which, being the virtue of number, is not a number. Then, as the unit which is not a number generates number, so the point which is not extended gives birth to extension."[1]

(*d*) Metaphysical points belong to what are called, in metaphysical language, "essences." But the essences of metaphysics are simply forces, powers, virtues (*vires, potestates, virtutes*) They are prior to, and different from, the things of which they are the essences or virtues Thus the essence or virtue, not only of mathematical but of real extension, is an antecedent, unextended, and indivisible *punctum* Thus the essence or virtue of motion is an antecedent *momentum which produces motion but is itself unmoved*

(*e*) Metaphysical points are described in one sense as substance and matter, and in another sense as neither substance nor matter The ambiguity so much complained of in Vico's language in this respect is rather

[1] Opere, vol. ii. p 79

are matter in the sense indicated, they possess not a single property of ordinary matter, and are, in reality, spiritual modes of the One Being,—forth-puttings of the Divine Will,—pure forces or potencies to which Deity has given fixity of existence. They are, therefore, contained in God, as external things are not, otherwise He would not be inclusive of all excellences—the *cumulus perfectionum* It is profane to think of extension or motion as in God, but we are bound to believe that He contains *eminently* (*eminenter*), as the theologians say, the virtues or essences of extension and motion.

(*f*) The transition from the metaphysical points which constitute the *materia prima*, or *natura in fieri*, to the external things which compose the physical world, or *natura in facto esse*, is effected by the *conatus* of the points. As Leibniz supposed that his *monads* were endowed with a certain *appetitus* (*quelque chose d'analogique au sentiment et à l'appétit*), in virtue of which they passed from one perception or act to another, so Vico imagined that his *points* possessed a certain *conatus*, or power of effort, in virtue of which they give rise to motion. At the same time, these points are not described as possessed of perceptions or sentiments, or as being souls, like the Leibnizian monads, they are simply centres of force which produce motion by an effort or energising which is itself no motion, and which, where itself equal, may give rise to unequal motions. The *conatus* is entirely metaphysical, it has no existence in the physical world, and cannot, like physical force, be measured, or properly said to be more or less The power required to create an ant or grain of sand is infinite, not less than the power required to create a

world or solar system Every metaphysical virtue partakes of and tends to infinity When a fish sustains itself or presses up against the current,—when a man pushes his hand against a wall,—there is no *conatus*, but merely motion, where action and reaction, shown in the coming and going of the animal spirits, the relaxation and tension of the nerves, &c, are equal In the whole external world, or wherever there is extension, and whether as regards things penetrable or impenetrable, there are no efforts properly so called, but only true motions *Extensa non conan* . The phenomena of outward nature can only be explained in terms of extension and motion—not by virtues or powers, or anything metaphysical. What the points explain is the origin of nature as extended and moved.

(*g*) All extended things are constantly in motion. There is nowhere rest in physical nature. All bodies are compound, and all compound things are in motion, either dissolving or forming Nothing is for a single instant in the same place, or the same relations of space or time Since all bodies are compound, and all are incessantly in motion, all motions are complex. There is no simple motion, or even motion in a straight line, in the actual world. Further, there is no transference of motion from one body to another All bodies are moved, and no body originates motion or communicates part of its motion to another The quantity is always the same,—not less in a body when apparently at rest than when visibly in motion The motion only changes its form. It may, for example, take the form of heat, but heat is simply motion. The influence of one body on the motion of another is limited to alteration of direc-

tion. This is the whole effect of machinery, and the visible universe may be regarded as a vast machine in which are countless smaller special ones The great instrument and common medium of change of direction is the air It is thus, as it were, the perceptible hand of God

Such is Vico's theory of metaphysical points. We see from it that he conceived of the whole of things as a mighty circle, at the centre of which there is Being,—the One—the Absolute Substance—God,—in perfect rest, at the circumference of which there are existences,—compound and multiple objects—mere effects,—in perpetual motion; and within which, intermediate in position and nature, are the points,—modes of being—essences—a world of virtues or causes,—in the state of effort which is transition from rest to motion.

The objection which has been oftenest urged against the theory is that it is, really although not admittedly, pantheistic, inasmuch as it represents God as the whole of Being, or one true substance, of which metaphysical points and physical things are simply the primary and secondary potentiations Perhaps this is not a very weighty objection. The mere acceptance of the principle of unity of substance seems an insufficient reason for designating a theory pantheistic. So long as any system of doctrine affirms, as Vico's undoubtedly did, that both God and man are moral personalities, so long as it does not include determinism and exclude freedom it may fairly claim not to be pantheistic Or if it waive this claim, in order to avoid controversy as to the signification of a term which has been very variously defined and applied, it may advance this other, that the pantheism which confines itself to affirmation of the unity of

substance is as legitimate and innocent a form of speculation regarding the relation of the infinite and finite, so far as they can be thought of under this category, as any which asserts dualism or plurality of substance.

The real objection to the theory, or rather to Vico's exposition of it, is that the chief theses which it comprehends are unsupported by anything resembling satisfactory evidence. An appeal to ancient Italic wisdom, to the authority of Pythagoras, to etymological conjecture, or to some *a priori* "must be" or "ought to be," is often all that we get. Hence each stage of the offered explanation is a mystery as great as that professed to be elucidated. The difficulty of conceiving how the One produced the many is not lessened by the hypothesis of points themselves many, but only transferred to the hypothesis. Hence some have supposed that Vico really meant, although he constantly spoke of *points*, that there was but *one point*. But what is thus gained? Can that which is impossible to the Absolute Being because of its unity, be possible to a metaphysical point notwithstanding its unity? His real conception, however, seems to have been that of many metaphysical points, and yet one undivided *materia prima*. But this, too, besides being an apparently self-contradictory conception, merely shifts the difficulty. How can primary matter, if strictly one, give rise to secondary matter, if strictly many?

The doctrine of *conatus* is, perhaps, the part of the theory which involves the most serious consequences. The idea of causes which, while equal in themselves, produce unequal effects, is one which reason refuses to entertain. Its assertion is a virtual rejection of the principle of causality itself. It makes it hopeless to

seek causes through effects, or, in other words, precludes from finding any traces of causality in nature It leaves no room for causes in the physical world, and no warrant for inferring causes from physical phenomena and events This result is in accordance with Vico's general theory of knowledge, and with the particular inference from it which he has himself drawn—namely, that a science of physical things is unattainable by man, since he is not in possession of their causes, yet it none the less shakes his whole philosophy It implies a breach of rational continuity even between the so-called causes and the so-called effects, and leaves no solid ground for affirming the existence of the so-called causes at all. In fact, at this stage of his teaching Vico made a very perceptible approximation to positions afterwards occupied by Hume and Comte

No person who has read the philosophical writings of Leibniz can fail to observe that the doctrine of Vico as to metaphysical points bears many marked resemblances to the doctrine of monads Hence arises the question, Did the author of the 'De Sapientia' borrow from the author of the 'Système Nouveau de la Nature'? It is a question to which I am not prepared to give a decided answer The resemblances not only between the two theories in themselves, but also in the language in which they are presented, are certainly both numerous and striking Leibniz applies the very designation "metaphysical points" to his real unities, the monads [1] It is not in the least surprising

[1] In the 'Système Nouveau,' &c, sec. 11, he says "On les pouvait appeler *points métaphysiques* ils ont *quelque chose de vital* et une espèce de perception, et les points mathématiques sont leur

that Ferrari, Cantoni, Werner, and other most competent judges, should have deemed it obvious that the later writer must have drawn from the earlier, without acknowledging indebtedness On the other hand, numerous and striking resemblances are not always due to direct filiation If two thinkers have been in contact with common sources of speculation—if they have the same general philosophical spirit and aim—if they are at one as regards many of their principles—it is quite possible that when led to deal with the same problem their solutions may not only in substance but in statement have numerous and striking resemblances, although arrived at quite independently of each other And all this holds of Leibniz and Vico Besides, from the view already given of the intellectual development of the latter, it must be obvious that his theory of metaphysical points was one which he was most likely to form for himself His own account of how he came to it is at once probable and adequate And while the language in which it is expressed often reminds us of that of Leibniz, it is also language which flows with perfect naturalness from the thought which it is intended to convey Further, although the two theories are akin, they are still essentially distinct theories

point de vue pour exprimer l'univers." The English physician, Dr Glisson, from whose 'Tractatus de natura substantiæ energetica' several historians of philosophy have supposed Leibniz to have to some extent derived his doctrine of monads, when speaking of the conception that matter might be infinitely divided, objects that the parts "could only be *mathematical points*, or, if one prefers the expression, *substantial points*, that is, something as it were substantially nothing, since matter cannot be without quantity" See on Glisson the article of Marion in the 'Revue Philosophique,' August 1882.

In treating of the doctrine of points, Vico has made no mention of Leibniz, and in the whole series of his works only speaks of him twice,—once in the second edition of the 'New Science,' and once in a letter to Monsignor Gaeta, undated, but written towards the close of 1737 Both references thus belong to a very late period of his life Both also couple the name of Leibniz with that of Newton, in connection with the account given of their philosophies in a book which Vico had recently read, the 'Historia de Ideis' of Brucker There is no external evidence that he knew more about the views of Leibniz than what he learned from Brucker within the last seven years of his life This again, however, does not warrant a definitive decision as to the point at issue Authors do not always cite those to whom they are most indebted. Yet it is difficult to suppose that if Vico had been acquainted with the writings of Leibniz when he wrote the 'De Sapientia,' he would have left his name unmentioned, not only in that work, but in his treatises on Jurisprudence, and in the first edition of the 'New Science' And if he had thus concealed his obligations to him, it seems improbable that he would have afterwards broken silence by pronouncing him one of the two men of greatest genius of the age

Dr Werner considers that the *qualitates efficaces* of Ficino may have been the antecedents of Vico's points I can perceive no specially close connection between the two conceptions. The qualities presuppose and belong to matter, the points do not The doctrine of points expressly denies to matter any operative and formative

The *animus* is an internal principle of motion which acts freely and aspires to the infinite It operates through the animal spirits, which are much more rapid than the vital spirits, so that the latter can be to some extent directed and controlled by means of the former Its seat is not in the brain—not in the pineal gland, as Descartes supposed—but in the heart, as many Latin terms and phrases show was the opinion of the ancient Italic sages. The brain is where there is most mucus and least blood, and much of it may be extracted, yet life, feeling, and reason proceed as before. The heart, on the other hand, corresponds to the seed in the plant, it is the organ in which heat, energy, and motion centre, and from which they issue, where life first appears and whence it last departs.

As in the *anima* is the *animus*, so in the *animus* is the *mens* The *mens* is in a measure dependent on the *animus*, because we think well or ill according as our affections are good or bad At the same time, it is not quite our own but a something given to us, for so far as we think aright, our thoughts are the thoughts of God within us God rules body and soul through the mind, which is the God within us, the *active intelligence* of the Aristotelians, the *ethereal sense* of the Stoics, and the *demon* of Socrates Even in our errors God is not absent from our view or without influence upon us, for what attracts us in the false is the appearance of truth, and what draws us to evil is the semblance of good We seem to see that motion is produced and transmitted by bodies,—that things which are in motion are at rest,—that the multiple is one, the different identical, &c, but all this is illusion, arising from our attrib-

uting, through want of attention and reflection, to creatures imperfectly representing the divine features, causality, unity, identity, rest, &c.—which are only in the divine itself We see only the finite, and feel ourselves to be finite, but the infinite is in our thought, and is the light of all our seeing, and the source of all our doing

As to the various faculties which Vico ascribes to human nature,—sense, memory, imagination, intellect, genius,—this is particularly to be remarked, that they are all represented as means of action and production. A *faculty* (*facultas*) is simply a *facility* (*facilitas*),—a means of easy execution or creation. Even the external senses are faculties in this signification. By means of them man, instead of merely receiving impressions from a world without, makes, so far as their help goes, what passes for the world without The objects of the senses are also productions of the senses. Colours and odours are not independent of vision and smell, but due to them Take away the senses and what they accomplish, and all that is left of the physical world are the extension and motion which are produced by the efforts of the metaphysical points So with the other faculties That internal sense produces what it feels is shown by the fact that men become aware when a fight is over of the pain of wounds to which they were insensible while it lasted. Memory is not merely retaining but recalling what has been perceived. Imagination fashions its images out of the materials supplied by memory The understanding is not less essentially productive "Intellectus verus facultas est, quo quum quid intelligimus, id verum facimus" The highest power of all, according to Vico,

is what he calls *ingenium* It is defined as the faculty which connects and unites things disjoined and diverse It observes the similarities of objects to one another, and makes objects which are similar to those that it observes. It is at once the insight of the man of genius, the ingenuity of the inventive mechanist, and the source of that likeness of manners out of which rises the common-sense of nations, in other words, at once the special faculty of science, the explanation of imitation and art, and the indispensable condition of the existence of societies It is all this, however, only because it is still more, even the immediate organ of the divine ideas, so that its sway in the mind is the reign of divine reason itself While the true and very nature of man, and his *facultas* or *facilitas per eminentiam*, genius is also the effective working of God in and through man,—the intellectual recognition and practical realisation of the thoughts and will of God Only so far as God creates, maintains, and reveals likeness, are human science, art, and communion possible

The process of knowledge is said to include perception, judgment, and reasoning, and these three connected acts are held to have three correspondent regulative acts Perception (intellectual apprehension and acquisition) requires to be guided and corrected by the topics, judgment by criticism, and reasoning by method The objections which readily suggest themselves to this distribution were urged by the reviewer in the 'Giornale de' Letterati d'Italia,' and replied to by Vico Referring our readers both for the objections and answers to the Appendix to the 'De Sapientia,' it must suffice here to say that the philosopher on this occasion developed somewhat more fully

the views as to the mode of ascertaining truth on which he had previously insisted in the 'De Studiorum Ratione,' and to which he afterwards repeatedly recurred. He dwelt on the necessity of conjoining topics and criticism in due order, and on the evils inevitably flowing from the prevalence of almost exclusive attention to the latter He expressed the conviction that too much faith was put in rules of method, and too little expected from genius, prudence, practical sense. He affirmed that no form of method was of universal application, and especially condemned the extension of the geometrical method into the sphere of contingent truth. And in this connection also his ruling idea may be clearly seen to have been that man s true end is productive action, physical and moral, personal and social, and that the sort of knowing which is mere theory, or mere erudition, or mere logic, and not a doing or making is not worthy of the name of knowledge, or of being sought by any art

Vico did not do much, perhaps for psychology by the remarks in the 'De Sapientia,' or indeed by the direct investigation of the individual mind. Yet psychology is not a department in which he accomplished little. It might even with considerable plausibility be contended that it was that in which he achieved most His 'Scienza Nuova' has not inaccurately been described as a psychology of nations He saw that just as biography should trace the development of the mind of the individual, so history, the biography of humanity, should trace the development of mind in humanity He saw that the true centre where all the manifold elements of an adequate theory of human development must meet can only be found in the principle and laws of mental activity

itself It was there he sought it, and he sought not without success He explained history by mind But in the measure that he did so he also necessarily explained mind by history These two things—the explanation of history by mind, and the explanation of mind by history —are inseparable,—are but the two sides of the same process

It is time, however, to bring this chapter to a close Two reasons explain—and may perhaps excuse, if excuse be needed—its length. The Metaphysics of Vico is that portion of his system of thought which is least known and most likely to be ignored It is also that portion of it which those interested in the study of philosophy proper may fairly claim as a right to have set before them with somewhat special fulness in a volume of the series of "Philosophical Classics"[1]

[1] The metaphysical philosophy of Vico has attracted attention only within the last fifty years Count Terenzio Mamiani, in his 'Rinnovamento dell' antica Filosofia Italiana,' 1834, was probably the first who sought to make evident the value of the views in the 'Libro Metafisico' as to the criterion of the conversion of fact into truth, as to the nature of force, motion, and matter, and as to the relation of the absolute to the phenomenal. Rosmini's judgment on the same doctrines was given in his 'Il Rinnovamento della Filosofia in Italia proposto dal Conte Terenzio Mamiani della Rovere,' 1836 Gioberti had an enthusiastic admiration of Vico, "the last of the true philosophers," and endeavoured to introduce as many of his thoughts as possible into his own system. His famous ideal formula, *Ens creat existentias,* rests on Vico's distinction between *essere* and *esistere* Those who have come most under the influence of Gioberti are those who have assigned the highest rank to Vico as a metaphysician Epifanio Fagnani, in his 'Della necessita e dell' uso della divinazione testificata dalla Scienza Nuova di G B Vico,' 1857, has ingeniously elaborated a philosophical doctrine which he holds to be the development and completion of that of Vico, and according to which, "divination," based on man's consciousness of the order and constancy of the laws of nature, is the source and explanation of intelligence,

speech, free will, religion, and society, and even essentially identical with Providence Pietro Siciliani, in his 'Sull Rinnovamento della Filosofia in Italia,' 1871, endeavours to show that only on the principles of Vico can there be raised a solid and comprehensive philosophy, inclusive of the truth in all systems, and reconciling idealism and positivism There are many acute and suggestive reflections, and much erudition in his volume, but also many unproved opinions and much seeming inconsistency Here also may be named A de Carlo s 'Istituzione filosofica secondo i principii di G B Vico,' vol i, 1855, and F de Luca's 'Saggio ontologico sulle doctrine dell' Aquinate e del Vico,' 1870

CHAPTER VII

VICO AS A THEORIST ON LAW

It was probably not a misfortune that the 'De Sapientia' was left unfinished. Any system of physics which Vico could have composed would have been of little importance. We may almost be thankful that he had not those opportunities which a treatise on physics would have presented of practically contradicting the great principle which he had so clearly enunciated—that physics should be kept free from metaphysics. It is certain that he would not, and indeed that he could not, have adhered to this principle in the actual discussion of physical questions. In his Autobiography he has complacently told us of some of his physical theories. They are not of a kind which would have advanced physical knowledge. They are the reverse of specimens of physics uncontaminated with metaphysics. The time was past for either good to be done or credit to be gained by a doctrine of physics based on the notion that each element in the composition of the universe is attracted towards a superior principle, which in its turn tends to mount to one above, and so on up to the eternal principle; or by a doctrine of medicine founded

on the theory of heat and cold, or by an identification of the nature of the loadstone with that of fire on the ground of fanciful analogies

It was not even to be regretted, I think, that our author did not occupy himself directly with ethics. Ethics, as one of the three great divisions of human knowledge, was far too large and complex a subject to be dealt with to advantage by any one man. And in its narrower sense of moral science, it could not in that age profit much from direct treatment. What it wanted, both as regards method and materials, could only be obtained indirectly through the prosecution of such studies of law and history as Vico initiated.

He early turned his attention, as we have seen, to the civil and canon law. And throughout his subsequent course, law was a subject which occupied a prominent place in his thoughts, and his study of which was never long interrupted. During a great portion of his professional life, a chair of jurisprudence was the goal of his worldly ambition. In teaching rhetoric he kept largely in view the wants of students of law. In the oration 'De Studiorum Ratione,' delivered in 1708, he first gave public expression to his belief that there was original work to be done in this department. Already he had become impressed with the differences between Greek and Roman legislation, and between various stages of Roman law, as well as with the broader features of contrast between ancient and modern jurisprudence. Already he perceived clearly that laws could not be understood if studied apart from the motives which originated them, and the

and necessities in which they had

the glossators and the humanists—the followers of Accursius and the followers of Alciatus—had alike been only preparing the way for a broader method, and materials for a vaster edifice, than they themselves contemplated, and that a jurist required to be a philosopher in order to ascertain the principles of law, and a historian in order to know the causes and conditions which determine the development of these principles and mould the character of the positive laws of an age or nation

It may seem somewhat strange that he should not have read the 'De Jure Belli et Pacis' of Grotius until he found it necessary to do so in order to write the biography of Caraffa The book had been published more than eighty years before, and had acquired an extraordinary reputation. But the works of Protestant authors did not circulate freely in Italy, and that of Grotius had been placed on the Index Expurgatorius Vico warmly acknowledges the great benefit which he derived from its perusal. It enlarged his thoughts and gave him a strong onward impulse It caused him to see, as he had not seen before, that the science of law must embrace the whole succession of human generations and the entire complex of nations It showed him, as nothing save a systematic elaboration of a department of law so substantially new as that of international law could have done, that the philosophy of law, far from being completed, almost required to be commenced. The doctrine or science of international law was manifestly a conquest, or rather, a creation, of the modern spirit in the domain of law Roman law had helped to lead up to it, and contained much which might

to have read neither the works of Ayala nor Gentilis, who were the direct predecessors of Grotius and may contest with him the claim to have founded the science of international law, the treatise of the learned Dutchman naturally produced the profoundest impression upon his mind, revealing to him at once a new phase and development of law and the significance of the idea on which it rested,—that idea of nationality which was to become a chief pillar in the edifice of the "New Science."

The method of Grotius, it must be added, was one particularly fitted to further the progress of Vico. He employed, to use his own words, "in confirmation of natural and national law, the testimonies of philosophers, of historians, of poets, lastly even of orators: not that we should indiscriminately rely upon them, for they are apt to say what may serve their party, their subject, or their cause; but because, when many at different times and places affirm the same thing for certain, we may refer this unanimity to some general cause, which in such questions as these can be no other than either a right deduction from some natural principle or some common agreement. The former of these denotes the law of nature, the latter that of nations."[1] Proceeding thus was far from being equivalent, as some authors would represent it, to the employment of the historical method. It was, however, suggestive of it, and a step of approximation to it. It involved to some extent the collection of data required by any one desirous of surveying and comparing various phases and stages of legislation in a philosophico-historical manner. It presup-

[1] In tres libros de Jure Belli ac Pacis Prolegomena.

posed throughout the fundamental principle of all historical philosophy, the common nature of man, and on this principle Vico's philosophy of history, and of all the special historical developments of human nature, is avowedly based

While he has acknowledged his obligations and expressed his admiration of the treatise of Grotius, it must be added that he seldom refers to it, either in his writings on jurisprudence or in the 'Scienza Nuova,' except to criticise and condemn some of its positions Opposition to Grotius was at least as influential a factor in the formation of his opinions as agreement with him In general his objections are not very relevant or decisive, indeed their chief worth lies in the light which they reflect on his own views One is that Grotius entirely ignored historical law, or, in other words, the historical development of law With all the erudition which he displayed in the illustration of his subject, he attempted no really historical investigation either of the origin or of the progress of the law of nations. Hence, according to Vico, he made various serious mistakes. If he had recognised how law originated in religion, he would not have supposed that its constitutive principle could be merely human. If he had traced its progress he would not have confounded the historical law of the Roman jurists with philosophical law, and still less have deemed so late a birth of time as the latter a product of the world's youth This objection is due in the main to disregard of the fact that historical law was not the subject with which Grotius undertook to deal. Another objection urged by Vico against Grotius is that he severed law from religion,—the idea of justice from the

idea of God. Modern historians of jurisprudence, like Lerminier and Bluntschli, represent it as the distinctive merit of Grotius that he freed the science from bondage to theology He sought to rest law simply on the principle of sociability supported and guided by reason, and so to treat of it that his conclusions must be admitted even by those who denied the existence of God or His interest in human things. To Vico this seemed not a merit but a grievous defect. Law, he protests, can have no other source than God, it originated in a sense of the presence and power of God, and has been continuously developed by the providence of God This, however, Grotius did not deny He merely deemed it expedient to treat the subject of jurisprudence by itself—that is, as the matter of a special sense, and hence to start from the idea of law as given in human nature But it was at once the strength and the weakness of Vico that he could not look at any subject from the point of view of special science, but must regard it as a philosopher, or, in other words, in all its relations, and especially in its ultimate principle He further objects to Grotius's belief in a law common to the Hebrews and the other nations And Selden he deemed had gone still more widely astray in the same direction, when he represented the fundamental laws of the Jewish people—the seven Noachic precepts—as the essential principles and all-inclusive type of the law of nature In reality, so Vico holds, the Hebrew legislation was entirely exceptional. The Hebrew law was obligatory only on the Hebrews Vico likewise affirms that Grotius erred, inasmuch as he did not recognise the true nature of historical authority, and had not studied the private law of states,

but neither of these objections takes into account the real design of the 'De Jure Belli et Pacis' He even speaks of Grotius as having confounded, in regard to utility, the rational cause with the historical occasion of law, when he himself seems almost quoting the passage in which Grotius declares, in opposition to Carneades, that utility is not the cause but only the occasion of law

Grotius, Selden, and Puffendorf he generally classes together as the three chief representatives of a school of jurisprudence which failed to distinguish aright either between Jewish and Gentile or between historical and philosophical law He passes nearly the same censures on all three He had read the works of all three, and he drew from them all some of his materials, but he was greatly more indebted to Grotius than to the others He on various occasions refers also to Hobbes, but in so vague a way that one cannot be sure whether he had read any of his writings or not He speaks of him always in the same fashion and in the same connection—namely, as an Epicurean who feigned that government and society originated in violence He likewise occasionally mentions Locke in a similar loose and general manner Considering the character of the references to which I allude, and the fact that he was unacquainted with the English language, we may safely conclude that he was uninfluenced by Locke's political writings

He tells us that the publication of his Memoirs of Caraffa procured him the friendship and intimacy of the celebrated author, Gian Vincenzo Gravina. Gravina died, however, in less than two years after the publication, and no remains of the correspondence which there

must have been between him and Vico have been discovered Rather strangely, also, the latter has nowhere mentioned the former except in the one passage in the Autobiography It is impossible that he can have been either ignorant of his writings or unaided by them Gravina had a great reputation in Italy, and, on the whole, well deserved it Although not a man of genius, he was a man of distinguished talent, although a cold and feeble tragedian, he was an excellent prose writer, the best literary critic of his generation, and a scholar and historian who combined revelation and insight in a rare degree In his 'Originum Juris Civilis libri tres' he gave the first clear detailed exhibition of the growth of human law through all stages of Roman history He thereby greatly facilitated the performance of the task which Vico was to undertake He confined his survey, indeed, to Roman law, but his description of its development is, on the whole, remarkably correct He was not only a predecessor of Vico, but, alike as regards time and historical intelligence, his immediate predecessor

The speculations which Vico embodied in the 'De Sapientiâ' were also not without influence on his theories as to the nature and development of law His writings on jurisprudence are connected by easily perceptible bonds with the 'Liber Metaphysicus' They are a natural sequel and supplement to it, they so far complete the treatise of which it was designed to be only a part, and likewise so far explain why that treatise was left a fragment

The distinction between truth and certainty in the doctrine of the criterion has already been shown to

have led not unnaturally, even although not strictly logically, to the recognition of the necessity of combining reason and authority, philosophy and philology, and so to the devising of a historical method applicable to the study of law

Then the etymological procedure of the Metaphysics was not simply discarded in the writings on jurisprudence. It was transformed. We hear no more, it is true, about abstruse truths being discoverable in common Latin terms,—about ancient Italic wisdom. The criticisms of the reviewer in the 'Giornale de' Letterati d'Italia,' and still more his own reflections had convinced Vico that the hypothesis which he had formed as to the origin of Latin was at least not one which he could generalise, but that, on the contrary, in so far as it might be true, Latin must be an exception to the general law of the development of language. But his sense of the importance to be attached to the investigation of language was not, in consequence, by any means lessened. On the contrary, he recognised that there was a general law of language and that it gave a hitherto unsuspected significance to every stage, form, and fact of language. He saw that language developed from sense to reason with the general development of the human mind in history, and so that its stages expressed and reflected the stages of all the great phases of human nature as, for example, religion or law. Thus language ran parallel to law, and the history of law could not fail to be throughout mirrored in that of language. This idea he had firmly grasped by the time that he published his writings on law.

Theological speculation, according to his own [illegible]

sion, had also a very great influence in giving form and character to his philosophy of law In the 'De Sapientiâ' God is conceived of as the Absolute One and First Truth,—the Being in whom are the *essences* of all *existences*, who originates and sustains all existences, and of whom all existences are the manifestations,—the truth which comprehends all *facts*, and in which alone all facts can be comprehended. But this is obviously a very imperfect and incomplete idea Supposing that by the aid of the doctrine of points it allows us to apprehend in some measure what the Absolute is as regards matter, it leaves us in the dark as to what it is as regards mind and its history Add even, which Vico does, as accordant with the idea of divinity presented in the treatise, that for God to will is to create, and that the eternal order of causes which we in our ignorance call *chance*, and which as connected with our interest we call *fortune*, is constituted by God's will, and we have not yet an idea of God which can be brought into close and fruitful conjunction with a theory of the development of law and society This Vico felt But at length there came to him the thought which he deemed to complete his idea, to give unity and order to all his views, and to involve a new and true philosophy This thought he first expounded in an inaugural discourse in 1719 The elements of all science and learning, he affirmed, could be reduced to three—knowledge, will, and power (*nosse, velle, posse*), and these three are one in mind, the eye of which is reason, and the light of which is truth God is a mind infinite in knowledge, will, and power, man is a mind finite in knowledge, will, and power This trinity in unity is the

central fact of the universe, the key which unlocks its mysteries, and a seal which is everywhere impressed upon it. It determines the natural distribution of the sciences as a system and of the contents of each separate science. Ontology, psychology, moral philosophy, jurisprudence, politics—all embody this fundamental law and truth, although each in its own way Of the existence of the three elements we are as certain as of our own existence, for they are present in all thought, and thought is the only thing of which we cannot doubt The principles of all science come from God Eternal truth is the divine light which penetrates into all sciences through the media of the three elements Hence all the sciences are closely connected with one another, and have their common source in the idea of God The knowledge of all things is threefold, according as it refers to their origin, course, or essence, and as to origin all things come from God, as to course all things return to God, and as to essence all things subsist in God Apart from God there is nothing but failure and falsehood Whatever has been spoken or written about the principles of science is true only in so far as it accords with these views, and false in so far as it departs from them.

It was what might have been expected, that some of Vico's hearers should deem his new thought when stated in this general manner much less valuable than he himself considered it, and judge that he was promising more than he could perform. This happened. But he was at least thoroughly in earnest, and he at once undertook to show that his general thesis could be illustrated by, and could be applied to, establish and organise

a particular science Hence, very shortly after the delivery of the discourse which has been mentioned, he published a 'Sinopsi al Diritto,' to indicate how in the light of his new idea he looked upon law But this was far too brief and vague From some of the jurists among whom it was circulated came back questions and criticisms, which, of course, confirmed his resolution not to delay dealing with the subject in a thorough manner Accordingly he next published an elaborate work on 'Universal Law' It consists of two books The first, which appeared in 1720, and was entitled 'De uno universi juris principio et fine uno,' professes to prove,—1st, that the principles of the science of law, as of every other science, come from God, which is what Vico calls the question *de origine*, and 2d, that the course of this science, like the course of all other sciences, is one which returns to God—the question *de circulo* The second book, which appeared in 1721, and was entitled 'De Constantia Jurisprudentis,' proposes to show that jurisprudence, with all science and all history, subsists in God—the question *de constantia* It is divided into two parts—the 'De Constantiâ Philosophiæ' and the 'De Constantiâ Philologiæ,'—the latter of which is much the longer and much the richer in contents

Thus the whole science of jurisprudence has its matter distributed according to a conception drawn from theology And theological conceptions and phrases are to be found in the treatment of all its parts His theory of law, like his theory of history in general, has consequently an undoubtedly theological character and colouring From the point of view of special science this may

well be regarded as a defect A science is a system which, before it can be properly constituted, must find its unifying and organising principle, not in the sphere of another science, but within its own sphere, it must not deduce it from some outlying truth and impose it upon its own facts, but must educe it from these facts themselves, and show that it is the true expression of their natures and relationships, or, in other but quite equivalent words, a science should be not an artificial but a natural system. It is necessary, however, not to exaggerate the defect indicated, supposing it to be a defect And to avoid this, two things must be borne in mind The first is, that while the jurisprudence of Vico bears so far a theological character, it is in no degree of a theocratical character It assigns no exclusive divine rights to any form of government or class of persons either in Church or State Vico cannot be included in what is commonly called the theological school of jurists The second consideration is that, notwithstanding his own firm belief in the close connection between his theology and his jurisprudence, the connection is in his actual exposition really very loose The two are not interfused, they are brought into little more than external contact Professedly, indeed, our author distributes the whole contents of jurisprudence according to the theological formula *de origine, de circulo, de constantia*, but in fact the formula remains to the last unexemplified in the concrete It is generally throughout the work left quite out of sight, it but slightly affects the treatment of any of the particular questions. So the three primary rights and the three forms of government are, indeed, said to correspond to the three

elements of all divine and human science, but the averment is allowed to stand as a mere assertion, and is not taken into account in the actual discussion of the aforesaid rights and forms The reader requires only to glance over the first part of the 'De Constantiâ Jurisprudentis' to convince himself that the theology and the jurisprudence of Vico are loosely, and, as it were, mechanically mixed—not intimately, and, as it were, chemically combined

The first book of the 'Universal Law' is the only one which we require to consider in this chapter The second book is, in reality, the first form of Vico's exposition of the "New Science" "Nova scientia tentatur" is the heading of the first chapter of its second part, and it might well be the title of the entire book Even as regards the first book, which it is convenient to designate simply the *De uno*, I must confine myself to a very few general remarks Its purely juristical definitions and distinctions, conjectures and theories, do not here concern us. Those who are interested in jurisprudence for its own sake must study the treatise itself Those who desire to see a general survey of its contents will find that given by M. Franck, in the 'Journal des Savants,'[1] in every respect excellent

The idea of greatest scientific value in the book is that which the author enunciates and illustrates at the outset in his preface. It is that jurisprudence rests wholly on the double basis of reason and authority, or, otherwise expressed, of philosophy and history Philosophy investigates and discloses the necessary laws of our natures and the necessary causes of things History is the record of the results of will, of human facts them-

[1] See the numbers for March and April 1866

selves, of the order of their succession, and the circumstances of their production. Jurisprudence, consequently, consists of three parts,—philosophy, history, and the application or accommodation of philosophy to history, of reason to facts, in a manner appropriate to the subject, which is law This is the fundamental position, the ruling principle, of the *De uno* Vico himself believed that it had historical antecedents, or rather he believed that the whole past history of law was its antecedent, but he undoubtedly also believed that the position itself was original, whatever approximations to it there may have been That he was the first seriously to labour at the construction of a system on the position will not, I imagine, be disputed by any competent student of the history of science. To affirm, on the other hand, that his mere enunciation of it was original might be too venturesome, considering the extreme difficulty of proving negatives of the kind. But I am inclined to hold that it was. And clearly it is a mistake in Professor Bluntschli to represent the following words of Lord Bacon as equivalent to it [1] "All who have written of laws have treated that subject either as philosophers or lawyers And the philosophers propound many things beautiful in speech but remote from use But the lawyers, each bound to the pleadings of his own country, or even to those of the Roman or Pontifical laws, do not use a sincere judgment, but discourse, as it were, in fetters" [2] This is an entirely different and comparatively commonplace statement It has practical significance, but is not a scientific thesis

[1] Allgemeine Statsrecht, Bd i 244

[2] De Aug Scientiarum, lib viii cap. 3

Vico illustrates his position as to the study of jurisprudence by a glance at the history of the discipline among the Greeks and Romans. Greece exemplified the divorce of authority from speculation, of facts from reason. Speculation, reason, was represented by the philosophers who theorised on the principles of law conformably to the tenets of their various sects and in connection with ethical and political questions. Authority, an exclusive adherence to facts and texts, was represented by a class of practicians, the πραγματικοί, who were acquainted only with the written laws and positive decrees. The consequence was that the Greeks had no jurisprudence or jurists properly so called. The place of jurisprudence was largely supplied by rhetoric, and of lawyers by rhetoricians, not to say sophists, who appealed either to philosophical dogmas or positive enactments as it served their immediate purpose.[1] Far otherwise was it among the Romans. There was no such division in their mind or life. For all the faculties of the Roman were directed and subordinated to action. From the first, when the knowledge and administration of law were confined to the patricians, who being all both legislators and jurists were necessarily acquainted alike with the text and reason of the laws, to the last, when Roman citizenship embraced the world, theory and practice were blended in the legislation of Rome. The growth of Rome was accompanied by a development of law which corresponded throughout to the ever-altering wants and circumstances of the state, just because it

[1] E. Amari, in his 'Scienza delle Legislazioni Comparate,' pp. 78-85, argues that the Greeks were far from so destitute of jurisprudence and jurists as Vico and others have affirmed.

never ceased to draw life and strength from the double root of reason and history. The Roman jurist combined in his single person the philosopher, pragmatist, and rhetorician of the Greeks. Hence one reason why Roman jurisprudence was capable of such immense expansion, and of adjustment to such a multitude and variety of changes, both internal and external.

Although in the course of its history Roman law became milder and juster, more humane and more reasonable, it never became entitled to be regarded as universal law. The reason embodied in the Roman law was always in the main civil reason, state motives, national self-interest. The principles of universal law must be drawn from recognition of the true natures of God and men, and of their relations; from recognition of what is implied in God being mind, infinite in knowledge, power, and will; in man being mind, finite in these attributes, yet tending to the infinite; in knowledge being the proper rule of power and will, and in the dependence of the finite on the infinite mind. At the same time, universal law, to be successfully interpreted, must be studied in the same manner, although in a larger spirit and on a broader scale, than Roman law. Rome, the people of law, must be our great teacher in the study of the whole world of law. The treatise on 'Universal Law' is meant to be a continuous proof of this. In its procedure there should be the same combination of factors by which the jurisprudence of Rome was elaborated; in other words, the method of universal jurisprudence is that which created Roman jurisprudence corrected and generalised. It is to be a method in which there is to be a constant use of philosophy, but of a philosophy

in possession of a correct and comprehensive view of the truth as to God and man, and of the just and good as implied therein, not the philosophy of sects and schools. It is a method in which there is to be taken into account not merely particular historical influences and expediences, but history as a whole, seen as regulated by a law according to which the rationality latent therein becomes always more apparent, as the idea of truth gradually disengages itself from the encumbrances and envelopments of sense and fantasy. The philosophy is to be enlightened by a metaphysics which will be the criticism of truth, and the history is to be guaranteed by a philology which will be the record of certainty Such is the conception of method pervadingly present, although very imperfectly realised, in the 'Universal Law,' and which was more successfully applied in the 'Scienza Nuova.'

Among the few matters in the *De uno* to which I would refer is the view taken of the origin of society Hobbes and Locke before the time of Vico, like Rousseau, Kant, and Fichte at a later period, represented society as originating in a contract or convention. According to these theorists—according to the doctrine prevalent in the eighteenth century—men lived at first in a state of nature, but passed therefrom by their own choice into a state of society, which they created by consenting to live and act together on certain conditions, or by what was called a social compact This doctrine contains important truth of a kind, as M Fouillée has recently shown in a very effective manner,[1] but it is quite untenable as an expression or explanation of historical fact There is no evidence or probability that

[1] See his 'La Science Sociale Contemporaine,' pp 1-73

a state of nature, as distinct from a state of society, ever existed. There is no evidence or probability that the social state was founded by compact Vico, as was to be expected of the founder of the historical school and method, saw this clearly, although he admitted that the social state might be preceded by a solitary state. The social state, he held, was the natural state of man. Men were made for communion both with God and with one another They could, indeed, fall out of this their natural state, and many of them did so, but when they became so degraded as to cease to live in society, and to wander savage and solitary in forests, they virtually ceased to be men, and became beasts Besides, when they had sunk into this brutal condition, they could not raise themselves out of it by their own wills alone, by any mere compact or convention. The dormant human nature in them had to be awakened from without External events required to be employed by Providence to make them feel in the presence of God, and so to be conscious of themselves as men, and not merely sentient as brutes Once human consciousness was evoked, the restoration of man's true natural state, the social state, became possible. It was only, however, gradually and slowly realised under the double influence of reason and necessity, intelligence and instinct. Vico did not fancy, as so many theorists have fancied, that it was any explanation of the fact that man was a social being, to say that he had been endowed with a principle of sociability Hence what he said was that man, even by the frame of his body, and still more by the constitution of his mind, was so made that he could not be truly man out of society, or

or propositions—a doctrine expressly rejected by Vico—but as the necessary conditions and regulative principles of all sane and successful thought

This leads us to a second point,—our author's view as to the principle of rightness or justice, as to the foundation or source of law As man, then, according to Vico, can only exist in and through society, so society can only exist in and through justice, the law or rule by which the material and spiritual services rendered in society are distributed Actual man—man *in concreto*—is man in society, and the constitutive principle of society is that of law Inasmuch as this principle unites all minds and supposes in all minds a common idea of truth, a common idea of order, it must have its primary source not in the many individual and finite minds which acknowledge it, but in that one infinite mind of which the self-manifestation is eternal truth, the eternal order of things It cannot be derived from interest as by Epicurus, from fear as by Hobbes, from necessity as by Machiavelli and Spinoza. These authors have confounded the occasions of the law with its cause—*i e*, *nature or ground* *Interests and necessities are the* occasions which awaken in men the consciousness of right, utilities are the very things with the distribution of which justice is concerned the laws of nature cannot be treated of without regard to the preservation and welfare of individuals and societies, for they are themselves the conditions of human existence and development, both individual and social But all this proves, in the opinion of Vico, that although the will of the just man must have a constant reference to utility, happiness, &c, it must also, in connection with them, be

under a law which is not contained in mere feeling or mere choice, but which reveals itself through reason directly as order, measure, proportion, and ultimately as truth. All the principles of natural law rest on a great universal principle—truth The equity which regulates the relations of men between one another is but an application of truth Every natural sentiment expresses itself as a want, and every natural want implies a natural right to satisfaction, but all these sentiments and rights are different modes or determinations of truth The primary idea of reason—the idea which presupposes no other idea—is the true The right presupposes the true. What is true to reason is a measure to feeling and a law to action For Vico, as for Mr Spencer, the ethical laws of nature are the conditions of existence, but he differs from our contemporary in regarding this as precluding the notion that they have a merely naturalistic or utilitarian basis, and as implying that they are the principles of a constitution of things which eternal reason can alone have instituted, and which can only be apprehended through reason

Another point is our author's theory of penal law The right to punish is a theme on which, as is well known, there has been much conflicting speculation among philosophers and jurists. Some have sought to found it on divine authority, and others on the interest of society, some would resolve it into self-defence, and others into expiation or retribution, some deem its exercise only warranted as a means of producing amendment—and others, regarding crimes only as diseases, would apply pains only as remedies The doctrine of Vico differs more or less from all these views It is an

attempt to include all the elements of a true theory According to it, the primary form of punishment is internal. When a law of nature and reason—a law of the divine will and wisdom—has been violated, the violation is followed by shame not to have known, or by remorse not to have obeyed the law, or, in other words, by the suffering of a mind conscious of its own self-degradation. This is the kind of chastisement which is the most appropriate of all, the most exactly proportioned to the faults committed. Were it always fully felt, it would be not only the justest but the most efficacious, and there would be no need for any other kind of chastisement External punishment can only be legitimate in so far as it comes in the place of this internal punishment,—only in so far as it is the substitute, supplement, or support of it, when dulled and disregarded in consequence of the power of evil passions and the depraving effect of vicious habits Because the edge of conscience becomes blunted, and the pain it inflicts ceases to be sharp enough, the interests of society are compromised in such a manner that external and material pain must be added by human law to the purely internal and spiritual pain which follows wrong-doing The external law and punishment must, however, be modelled on the internal law and punishment The voice of the judge without should correspond to what would be the voice of the judge within, were it allowed to be clearly heard. Otherwise penal law must be the expression of arbitrariness or vengeance But since penal law should thus as far as possible be the representative of conscience, it should have the same ends—the amendment of the offender and the protection of

society. The amendment of the offender is to be kept in view so long as it can be hoped for, but although this may be hopeless, society is entitled to inflict suffering on criminals as far but not farther than may be required for its self-protection. Actions not hurtful to society society is not justified in dealing with by penal law.[1]

From penal law Vico passes to the consideration of civil law It rests, he maintains, on three principles which are inseparable from each other, and which together constitute the civil person—liberty, dominion, and tutelage. Most interesting is the manner in which he derives them from human nature, and in which he traces their development, and shows how legislation and positive law have to do with guaranteeing and regulating them, but these are points on which I must not even touch. It is necessary, however, to remark that Vico labours to prove that the same principles of justice, the same conditions of civil order, which philosophy teaches in the name of reason, are found gradually and necessarily to appear in history through the force of things, *ipsis dictantibus rebus* Notwithstanding all appearances to the contrary, the reason which has embodied itself in nature also pervades and governs history. However independent, hostile, or masterful the interests and passions of individuals, classes, and nations may seem to be in regard to it, they are in fact, but the instruments by which it builds up its empire. For Vico, as for Hegel, the real is rational, and the rational

[1] In a special work, 'Critica della pena, e svolgimento di alcuni principii intorno al diritto di punire,' 1869, A. Luchini compares the doctrine of Vico on penality with those of Kant, Bentham, Romagnosi, Rossi, and others, and concludes that it is the true theory

real. And the reason which eventually asserts itself as the true reality likewise asserts itself as the true rightness. Human nature cannot be at rest so long as the principles of justice inherent in reason are disregarded in practice. Until all natural rights are fully enjoyed by all, the sense of wrong felt by some must give rise to civil strife, the struggle of class with class. The history of Rome is represented as a continuous proof. It began with a condition in which the rights of liberty, property, and tutelage existed only in the form of patrician privileges, but it ended in their being recognised as the rights of every member of the Roman world. Each of these fundamental rights passed through a series of phases corresponding to the collective movement of society—or, in other words, had a history influencing and influenced by the general history of the Roman people; and their developments or histories were manifestations of the essential nature of reason.

To explain the civil law of the Romans, Vico perceived that one must explain the revolutions of their governments, and consequently trace the succession of their forms of government, or of what he often calls "republics." These are divided by him into simple and mixed. The latter are innumerable, as they vary according to the compacts in which they originate. The former are three—aristocracy, monarchy, and democracy; and all three are divine in origin, and embraced in an order which is divine. The results at which Vico arrived on this subject, had an immediate and most influential bearing on his historical philosophy. Indeed, the doctrine of the succession of the "republics" is a considerable part of that philosophy. For the order of

succession exemplified in Roman history, Vico held, was to be traced in the history of every nation which had a complete history, or in other words, of every nation which had destroyed itself by disobedience to the natural law Nations which deviate from the true path, fall into a state of corruption and dissolution from which they can only escape by retracing their steps to the place whence they went astray. "Corruptæ autem respublicæ emendatione reparantur, si præsentia ad pristina instituta revocentur, aut pristina instituta ad præsentia producantur, quod est tantumdem."

The doctrine of our author as to the forms of government was necessarily to a large extent inherited, seeing that no other portion of political science, perhaps, had been more successfully studied by earlier thinkers. A classification of governments, based on the fact that the sovereign power in a state may be exercised by one man, or by a few, or by the many, must have been current long before Plato showed its significance for political philosophy Herodotus represents it as familiar to the Persian princes who conspired against Smerdis.[1] The exposition which Plato gave of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, as the three chief forms of government, of tyranny, oligarchy, and ochlarchy, as the perversions to which they are respectively most liable; of the mental sources of each, of the excesses and defects peculiar to each, and of the causes which determine changes of government,—laid the foundation of all subsequent theorising on the subject[2] Aristotle criticised in an interesting manner what Plato had taught, amended it with characteristic good sense, and supple-

[1] Hist., iii. 80-83

[2] Republic, viii.-ix, and 'Statesman'

active or motive principle of aristocracy to be the power of manners and customs, of monarchy the arbitrary regarded as of divine appointment, and of democracy law, as the expression of the common or collective will The portion of his treatise in which he has drawn and applied the distinction now indicated, strikingly anticipates the teaching of some of the most remarkable books of the 'Esprit des Lois' Indeed, this affords the chief argument which has been adduced to show that Montesquieu borrowed from Vico, but concealed his obligations to him. It seems to me quite insufficient for the purpose The charge of plagiarism from Vico, which has been brought against Montesquieu, I regard as utterly unwarranted.[1] Montesquieu may never have read a line of Vico's writing At the same time, the coincidence of views to which I have referred is real and remarkable, and Vico is entitled, of course, to whatever honour may be involved in priority of statement

The distinctive honour of Vico as a writer on jurisprudence was, that he was the first to expound and apply in an explicit, self-consistent, and systematic manner, the principles of the historical method. Aristotle, Machiavelli, Bodin, and others, had clearly taught that history is a source of political instruction, that the comparison of the constitution and laws of governments of all forms, and under the most varied circumstances, is indispensable as a means of forming political

[1] The story of Lomanaco to the effect that Montesquieu, when in Venice, got possession, in a clandestine manner, of the sheets of the 'New Science, when it was passing through the press, and then tried to prevent its publication, may be summarily dismissed as an atrocious calumny

science; and that the legislation which suits one age or nation will not suit another. By laying down these truths, they had certainly approximated to the historical method. But they only approximated to it. Vico actually adopted it, and adopted it as deliberately and decidedly as did Savigny. The general doctrines which the latter advocated with so much skill and success in the pamphlet 'On the Vocation of our Age for Legislation and Jurisprudence,' and in his 'System of the modern Roman Law,' are just the tenets which Vico had avowed and acted on as fundamental. For Vico, as for Savigny, law was not the product of individual wills which externally imposed their fiats on nations, but the embodiment of the spirit of nations,—an embodiment which implicitly contains at every stage a system of practical principles, the organic nature of which is manifested both by the character of the connection of its parts, and by its progressive development.[1]

[1] The views of Vico on the philosophy of law were to some extent adopted and applied by N. Concina in his 'Originis fundamenta et capita prima Juris Naturalis,' 1734, and 'Juris Naturalis et Gentium doctrina,' &c., 1736; and to a much greater extent by E. Duni in his 'Saggio sulla Giurisprudenza universale,' &c., 1760. There is a careful exposition of Vico's juristical opinions in Carmignani's 'Storia delle origini e de' progressi della Filosofia del Diritto,' 1851. No book, however, in the department of jurisprudence nearly equals in interest or value to a student of Vico Amari's 'Critica d' una Scienza delle Legislazioni Comparate,' 1857.

CHAPTER VIII.

TRANSITION TO THE NEW SCIENCE.

THE 'De Constantia Jurisprudentis' is, as has been already said, for the most part a sketch of a "new science"—the science of history. It is a philosophical view of the development of the history of Rome, which is regarded as the history of the typical nation, the history which all other histories more or less resemble. In this history the development of law has assigned to it the central place. Most nations have left only scattered traces and fragments of their laws. The whole history of Rome lies before us permeated by law, and the development of law in Rome appeared to the eye of Vico not merely as an isolated process, but as one in which were exemplified with special clearness and fulness the principles of all human development. Thus it virtually seemed to him, as Ferrari observes, itself a system, a science. The "new science" was Rome idealised and generalised. But it is manifest that a science of history cannot be properly exhibited as a part of a treatise on jurisprudence. The history of humanity cannot be a portion of, or an appendix to, jurisprudence, however important jurisprudence may be to humanity. The development

of law is only one of the developments of humanity, and to be understood must be viewed in relation to the whole in which it is comprehended Hence Vico was bound to give to his "new science' an independent position and treatment, to exhibit it as not merely exemplifying and illustrating, but as including and explaining the development of law This he was not long in doing The science, however, never ceased in his hands to bear the impression of its origination in the study of law Alike as presented in the first and the second 'Scienza Nuova,' it was a science in which the history of humanity was interpreted by that of Rome, and the history of Rome by the history of Roman law

The conclusions at which Vico arrived regarding the early history of the classical world had accordingly a decisive influence on the formation of his general philosophy of history They were very remarkable conclusions It is surprising to find that a man who was so timid in some respects should have shown in the sphere of historical criticism an almost unprecedented boldness, that one who attached so much importance to tradition, authority, common opinion, should have taken up a radically revolutionary attitude towards universally accepted conceptions of the past of humanity The courage of Wolf or of Niebuhr, in the avowal of their historical scepticism, fell far short of that of Vico. Wolf's hypothesis was confined to a single point, even Niebuhr connected his Roman researches with no general doctrine, Vico not only represented the whole of Gentile history to the Peloponnesian and the Second Punic War as a chaos of fictions utterly vain and unintelligible if taken literally, but laid this supposition down as a

fundamental condition of all true comprehension of society and of history His various special critico-historical hypotheses were the chief steps by which he advanced to his "new science." Some who have written of him without having studied him have conveyed the impression that he extemporised in some arbitrary or *a priori* manner a theory of history, and afterwards devised hypotheses as to the source of the laws of the Twelve Tables, the origin of the Homeric poems, the character of early ancient history, the nature of the myths, &c., to suit it This is an inherently absurd view, as no philosophy of history which ventures to deal with details can possibly be formed without a considerable amount of study of history And it is manifestly contrary to fact. Vico's particular hypotheses can be actually traced, giving rise to his general doctrine The development of his system is known to us from documentary evidence, we can follow it in its growth, and doing so we cannot fail to perceive that in the main the hypotheses referred to led up to it, instead of coming after it I say "in the main," for my position is not inconsistent with the admission that the hypotheses in question were to some extent derived from the principles of the general theory This admission must be made But a similar admission must be made regarding all other general theories Their formation is always and inevitably a twofold process, in which the facts and ideas, the special and the general, continuously contribute to mutual determination and illumination, while the direction of the process is, on the whole, from particularity to universality That Vico's special historical hypotheses led to his general historical doctrine is none the less true, from its being also true

that he might not have formed them had he been absolutely without general views as to history, and that their final shape was due in a considerable degree to the influence of his general doctrine

It has often been said that Vico's historical hypotheses were merely "divinations" or "intuitions," and are consequently not entitled to be classed with those of Wolf or Niebuhr What does this mean? Are mere conjectures or guesses understood by divinations and intuitions? If so, the statement is a misrepresentation which can only be excused on the plea of ignorance There was, of course, a large amount of guessing and conjecturing in the processes by which Vico reached his hypotheses, as there also was in those by which Wolf and Niebuhr reached theirs, but the processes were essentially the same, historico-critical hypotheses The notion that views so comprehensive and so accordant with the facts as those of Vico regarding Roman history could be "divined" by the simple force of conjecturing is ludicrous The only sense, it seems to me, in which Vico can be reasonably said to have attained his conclusions by divination or intuition is his own,—a sense in which divination cannot be contrasted with criticism, intuition with research. He attributed great importance to divination and intuition He held strongly that original discoveries could only be made by men of original mind, by men of genius, largely endowed with intellectual susceptibility, with the constructive imagination, with "the vision and the faculty divine," who being in specially close contact with the divine reason in things, can see into them and comprehend them as others cannot, and are made the media of fresh revelations regarding them

According to this view, all great discoveries are intuitions and divinations, and if this be the sense in which these terms are applied to Vico's hypotheses, no objection need be offered. Divination and intuition so understood do not imply that facts may be ignored, that investigation is of little account, that either ideas or testimonies may be safely accepted without being critically tested. Vico was fully aware that historical generalisation required acquaintance with the relevant particular facts and a critical and methodical treatment of them, although he deemed that it also required the penetrative insight of reason divinely illumined.

His inquiry into the origin of the laws of the Twelve Tables was a truly critico-historical investigation. It was on properly critical principles and strictly historical grounds that he pronounced the statements of Livy, Dionysius, Strabo, Pliny, and Tacitus insufficient to warrant belief in the mission to Greece, and maintained that there were not to be found in the extant fragments of the laws of Twelve Tables any traces of the laws of Solon or other Grecian legislators. He pointed to the contradictions and improbabilities in the story of the mission, to the causes which would account for its rise and spread, to the necessity of there being certain similarities between the laws of Rome when the Twelve Tables were composed, and those of Athens at what had been its corresponding stage of history, altogether irrespective of borrowing or transplantation, and to the reasons for considering the various decisions in the Tables as of native origin. He indicated, in fact, almost every argument which has since been urged on the side he adopted. And he obtained a very considerable

measure of almost immediate success. There soon appeared both advocates and opponents of his view.[1] Where there had been only one opinion, there were henceforth two. The discussion which ensued was at least indirectly fruitful. By boldly rejecting the traditional and opposing to it another supported by reasons so weighty, or at least so plausible, that his opinion and his argumentation have been since generally accepted, Vico rendered a very manifest service to the cause of freedom of inquiry in the study of law and its history. He found in it his own reward. It was a step which led him to take others, a conclusion rich in ulterior consequences. When once he had convinced himself that the laws of the Twelve Tables were a record of the ancient customs and natural law of the people of Latium from the age of Saturn, the extant fragments of them immediately acquired in his eyes a new and vastly enhanced significance. They appeared full of invaluable instruction as to the thoughts and feelings of the heroic tribes of the first ages of Rome.

The view of early Roman history as a whole to which he eventually attained was one which anticipated in the most remarkable manner the conclusions of German research in the nineteenth century. Already with the first awakening of the revival [illegible] suspicion as to the credibility of the [illegible] history of early Rome. Laurentius Valla [illegible]

[1] [illegible]

fifteenth century, and Glareanus in the sixteenth In the seventeenth century Holland possessed a school of learned criticism which had its chief seat at Leyden, and of this school one member, Bochart showed that the traditions as to Æneas were unhistorical, another, Gronovius, argued that the story of Romulus was a legend, and a third, Perizonius brought to light the frequent contradictions of the Roman historians, and declared that the earlier books of Livy contained traces of the popular songs of primitive Rome. But Vico made an enormous advance on the most advanced of his predecessors He went even far beyond all who succeeded him in the same path until Niebuhr appeared. The dissertation of Poully on "The uncertainty of the first four centuries of Roman history," and the much more masterly one of Beaufort on "The uncertainty of the first five centuries of Roman history,' were not only posterior both to the 'De Constantia Jurisprudentis' and to the first edition of the 'Scienza Nuova,' but were purely negative in their aim, while Vico's historical scepticism was but a clearing of the ground for his work of construction He contended for the freest critical treatment of early Roman history, because he was convinced that so treated it would prove far richer in positive truths than if the traditions of antiquity were passively received. Beneath the mythical story he held that there lay a real history, sought to bring it to light, and largely succeeded unless Niebuhr and his successors also completely failed.

From want of the requisite linguistic data, he was unable to distinguish, like recent investigators, the primitive races or indigenous stocks of Italy, to describe their characteristics, to trace their affinities, or to esti-

mate what they contributed to the history of the people into which they were gradually absorbed, but he clearly recognised that various native tribes had been the constituent elements of the earliest history In the struggles of patricians and plebeians he discerned the secret of the grandeur and duration of the power of Rome, and has noted the traces which these struggles left in the successive deposits both of law and legend While his conceptions as to the origin and nature of the "gentes," and as to the original identity of the plebeians and clients, differ from the conclusions of Niebuhr, they are substantially the same as those of Mommsen Even his representation of the early government of Rome as properly aristocratic, not democratic, is one to which Mommsen has approximated in his 'Romische Forschungen,' although, in his earlier and more widely known work, the 'Romische Geschichte,' he had, like Niebuhr and Schwegler, given a different view I must not dwell, however, either on the resemblances or differences between Vico's ideas of Roman history and those of the German school. Readers who wish further information on these points may be referred to Cantoni [1] and Werner [2]

Vico also attached great importance to what he called his "discovery of the true Homer" It was a discovery which he made gradually He first discussed the ques-

[1] Chap xi

[2] Chap x. The 'Roman History' of Niebuhr appeared in 1812; and four years afterwards the eminent philologist Caspar Orelli pointed out in an article on "Niebuhr and Vico" in the 'Swiss Museum,' that the latter had still more wonderfully anticipated the views of Niebuhr than those of Wolf From Niebuhr there was no response

tion of the origin of the Homeric poems in the notes published in 1722 as supplementary to the treatise on 'Universal Law' The aim which he proposed to himself in these notes was to prove that the Homeric poems dated from about the close of the Greek heroic age, and were valuable sources of information regarding the ideas, beliefs, and customs of that age, but contained no recondite or philosophic wisdom The impersonal character of the poems was not affirmed The traces of ignorance and rudeness in them were what was dwelt on, and an attempt was made to exhibit what actually were the notions which they implied of nature, geography, morality, religion, &c. In the first edition of the 'Scienza Nuova' the Homeric question was left undiscussed The obvious inference is that Vico had not advanced at this date beyond the position which he had taken up in the "Notæ." In the second edition, however, published in 1730, a whole book is set apart to a new treatment of the subject, which ends in the result that Homer was as much a myth as any of his own heroes The true Homer is here affirmed to be the Greek people itself, in its ideal or heroic character, relating its own history in national poetry In other words, the Homeric poems are regarded as not the creations of the genius of an individual, but the formations of the genius of a race working throughout a period of about 460 years The 'Iliad' was the work of the youth of Homer—that is to say, of the infancy of Greece Hence the admiration of power and the unveiled exhibition of passion characteristic of it Hence its ideal of manhood, Achilles, the hero of force The 'Odyssey,' on the other hand, was the work of the old age of Homer—

that is to say, of a time when the passions of the Greeks began to be cooled by reflection, the mother of prudence, and when the delights of Calypso, the voluptuousness of Circe, and the songs of the Sirens, had greater charms than the pride of Agamemnon or the violence of Achilles Hence its distinctive features, and its ideal of manhood, Ulysses, the hero of wisdom The Peisistratidæ first divided and disposed the Homeric poems into the 'Iliad' and the 'Odyssey', but for doing so they had a warrant in the diversities of matter, sentiment, and style in the two poems, and in their numerous irreconcilable discrepancies Under the name of Homer there has come down to us the work of many heroic poets, yet we may speak of two Homers—two authors through whom the genius of Greece chiefly expressed itself—the Homer of the 'Iliad' and the Homer of the 'Odyssey' The former must have been a native of the north-east of Greece, and must have long preceded the latter, a native of the south-west of the country The two poems, however, were probably elaborated and continued by various authors during many successive generations Thus the true Homer is discovered The discovery secures to him certain glorious titles which have been assigned to him, yet to which the Homer of tradition can have no right It proves him to have been the founder of the civilisation of Greece, although that was initiated from the epoch of Deucalion and Pyrrha by the institution of marriage. It entitles him to be deemed the father of poets, although before the traditional Homer the theological poets had flourished. It shows how he could be the source of Greek philosophy, yet without any claim to the possession of an abstruse or metaphysical wisdom.

much debated "Homeric question" which Vico raised. A definitive settlement of it has not yet been attained. The mere agitation of it, however, has been of immense influence and benefit. The study of Homer has been revolutionised. Vistas of light have been opened up into regions of antiquity which would otherwise have been left in darkness. The new theory, whatever be its ultimate fate, has amply justified its claims to consideration by its results,—the permanent intellectual conquests to which it has led. There is truth in it which all acknowledge. Every man of cultivated intelligence now feels in reading the Homeric poems that they are not merely the compositions of a man of genius, but the self-revelations of a race, the spiritual creations of an epoch, and can no more believe in the old view of an individual Homer who invented the poetry and made the gods of Greece, than he can credit the old myth of Pallas springing full-grown and armour-clad from the brain of Zeus. However decidedly the modern scholar may contend for one Homer or two Homers, he is certain to proceed, as a matter of course, in his study of the 'Iliad' and 'Odyssey,' on the supposition that there is no understanding of them possible, unless alike their contents and form be regarded as mainly the perfected products of the poetic genius of a heroic people operative through many generations. In a word, he tacitly or avowedly supplements his affirmation of a Homer by conceding many Homers, great and small, and by practically at least admitting that to refer the 'Iliad' and 'Odyssey' to Homer is to explain nothing, unless by Homer be meant the voice of heroic Greece, and his poems be regarded as the testament of heroic Greece—its

It implies that he was a historian,—the most ancient historian of paganism known to us,—since all primitive history must have been poetical, and all primitive poetry but an exaggerated and imaginative form of history

It should be obvious even from this brief statement of Vico's "discovery of the true Homer," that it was a complete anticipation of the so-called Wolfian theory, and one might almost say of the entire Wolfian movement, of Homeric speculation It anticipated every general position maintained by Wolf, and did so on the same general grounds, and it combined with Wolf's affirmation that Homer was "an eponymous name," Hermann's hypothesis of an "Ur-Ilias" and an "Ur-Odysse," and Lachmann's "Klein-Lieder-Theorie" Vico, and not Wolf or any one else, was the true author of the kind of Homeric criticism and speculation improperly termed Wolfian. Only crass ignorance or gross injustice can account for his serious advocacy of the whole system being put by various writers on the same line and level with the incidental and inconsiderate sentence in virtue of which Bentley is credited with having been a forerunner of Wolf, or with such sort of indirect suggestion as Wood may have supplied.[1]

It would be unwise to attempt to discuss here the

[1] After Wolf published his famous 'Prolegomena ad Homerum,' his attention was drawn by the Italian *littérateur*, Cesarotti, to the fact that his conclusions agreed remarkably with the views set forth in the 'Scienza Nuova' In consequence, he published an article on Vico in his 'Museum der *Alterthumswissenschaft*' for 1807 That his own two chief ideas—that as to the origin of the Homeric poems, and that as to the nature of Alterthumswissenschaft—had both been attained by the Neapolitan thinker, should have helped him to a right appreciation of his genius, but it had just the contrary effect, and his article was, in consequence, unintelligent and unsympathetic

much debated "Homeric question" which Vico raised A definitive settlement of it has not yet been attained The mere agitation of it, however, has been of immense influence and benefit The study of Homer has been revolutionised Vistas of light have been opened up into regions of antiquity which would otherwise have been left in darkness The new theory, whatever be its ultimate fate, has amply justified its claims to consideration by its results,—the permanent intellectual conquests to which it has led There is truth in it which all acknowledge Every man of cultivated intelligence now feels in reading the Homeric poems that they are not merely the compositions of a man of genius, but the self-revelations of a race, the spiritual creations of an epoch, and can no more believe in the old view of an individual Homer who invented the poetry and made the gods of Greece, than he can credit the old myth of Pallas springing full-grown and armour-clad from the brain of Zeus However decidedly the modern scholar may contend for one Homer or two Homers, he is certain to proceed, as a matter of course, in his study of the 'Iliad' and 'Odyssey,' on the supposition that there is no understanding of them possible, unless alike their contents and form be regarded as mainly the perfected products of the poetic genius of a heroic people operative through many generations. In a word, he tacitly or avowedly supplements his affirmation of a Homer by conceding many Homers, great and small, and by practically at least admitting that to refer the 'Iliad' and 'Odyssey' to Homer is to explain nothing, unless by Homer be meant the voice of heroic Greece, and his poems be regarded as the testament of heroic Greece—its

legacy to historical Greece. To do this is to agree substantially with Vico The essential point in his doctrine is not whether there was a personal Homer or not, but whether the Homeric poems were not the creations of a race and of an age in a sense in which no one could represent Virgil's 'Æneid' or Milton's 'Paradise Lost' to be products of the spirit of the epochs in which they appeared In fact, justice demands that we regard Vico not merely as the originator of a new hypothesis about the authorship of the Homeric poems, but also, and even more, as the initiator of a new mode of studying these poems.

The 'Scienza Nuova' was a most original work, but probably Vico deemed it even more original than it was All originators are apt to exaggerate their originality The words *Scienza Nuova* of themselves remind us of *Novum Organum*, and of the epigraph which Montesquieu chose for the 'Esprit des Lois,'—*prolem sine matre creatam.* No product of the human mind, however, is a creation *ex nihilo* Vico's "science," the reader has been already shown, was not wholly "new" And it still remains for me to refer to some authors who may fairly be held to have contributed to its formation

Among the thinkers of antiquity, Plato must be here especially mentioned. Aristotle may have had as much influence in giving form and character to our author's metaphysical doctrine, but Plato has decidedly more right to be regarded as his predecessor in the department of historical philosophy The 'New Science' of Vico is a sort of counterpart of the 'Republic' of Plato The ideal of the former is that of the latter amended and

enlarged Plato sought to delineate a perfect state, the type and model of what social and political life should be, and in doing so he took analogy for his guide. He conceived of his perfect city as a community of which the various members and classes were governed by the wisest in the same manner that in the soul of the wise man all principles and passions are ruled by reason. This ideal he presented as immutably true, as always to be aimed at even although it may never be realised, and as the standard by which all forms of government are to be judged, the evil of any actual society being measured by the degree of its deviation from the type This ideal laid hold of Vico, yet failed to satisfy him. It drew him on to the quest of a perfect city, but in the course of his search he was gradually brought to see that it could not coincide with any form of government which human intelligence could devise, or human will establish, that it could not be any immutable type of polity, but that it must include the whole community of the nations, bound to one another so as to compose a world of moral order, and ruled by laws through which reason is ever operative Contemplation of the ideal city of Plato helped him to the vision of an actual city of God, which hath its foundations in all the kingdoms of the earth, and the laws of which are those inherent in the self-realisation of eternal reason And in the 'Republic' itself—in the whole teaching of its eighth and ninth books—he had presented to him the doctrine which was most likely to suggest that the Platonic ideal was too rigid and narrow,—that doctrine of the forms, succession, and modes of alteration or corruption of governments, to which there has already been occasion to refer

as most important alike in political and historical science [1]

I pass over Aristotle, who, I think, can only have contributed directly to the contents of the 'New Science' by his criticism and development of the doctrine of Plato as to the forms of government, and also Cicero, who largely influenced the mind of Vico in a general way, but had no new idea of a historico-philosophical kind to convey to any one St Augustine, on the other hand, must be deemed, I believe, another of our author's direct predecessors The references to the 'De Civitate Dei' in the 'Second New Science' are such as to show that it had been read with close attention It must have strongly confirmed Vico in some of his most fundamental convictions,—in the belief of Providence in history, of order and law in human affairs, of particular passions and interests being rendered by Supreme Reason subservient to general ends, of the analogy of the growth of the individual to that of the race, and of the futility of the Epicurean chance and the Stoic fate as principles of historical explanation. But his theory of history is by no means a simple continuation of that of Augustine, on the contrary, the differences between them are as profound as the resemblances Vico does not, like Augustine, look upon history in relation to predestination, the fall, redemption, and the end of the world, but as a manifestation of human nature and of fixed laws He conceives of Providence very differently from Augustine Although he draws too wide a dis-

[1] E Fiorentino treats in an interesting manner of the relation of the 'Scienza Nuova' to Plato's 'Republic' in his 'Scritti Varii," pp 164-170

tinction between Hebrews and Gentiles, it is that he may be the freer to occupy himself with the latter. Augustine represents history as composed of the histories of two antagonistic cities—a *civitas celestis s. Dei* and a *civitas terrena s. diaboli*—the one composed of the elect, and the other of the reprobate; the one the true church, and the other the world and its kingdoms. Vico does not explicitly assail this Augustinian dualism, but he silently sets it aside. He nowhere credits the devil with power to build up a city on earth. He views all the kingdoms of the earth as included in the city of God.

Machiavelli may also be named, in the connection which now concerns us, as one of his predecessors. While admitting the clearness and keenness of historical insight displayed in the writings of the famous Florentine historian and politician, he disliked too much what he termed his "immorality and impiety" to acknowledge special indebtedness to him; but such indebtedness there obviously was. To a very considerable extent the historical philosophy of the 'Scienza Nuova' was a natural development of the theorising in the 'Discorsi sopra la prima deca di T. Livio.' In every page of this latter work Machiavelli is found comparing one epoch of history with another,—what happened in one nation with what happened in another. It is almost wholly on the parallelism of individual occurrences or of series of occurrences that he rests his historical and political inferences. He does not affirm, however, that any cases are precisely parallel, nor does he fall into the error, which could alone naturally lead to such a notion, of supposing historical parallelism to be an ultimate inex-

plicable fact, on the contrary, he correctly refers it to its source,—the essential identity of human nature in all lands, at all times, and under all forms History is ever substantially repeating itself in the most distant and diverse nations, because all nations are composed of men, and men are everywhere actuated by substantially the same passions, yet it never precisely and in all points repeats itself, because man is an eminently modifiable and changeful being In referring the analogies between ancient and modern occurrences to their source in human nature, Machiavelli touched, as it were, the great truth that historical science must be founded on mental science But he merely touched it He entered on no investigation into the psychological principles which must serve as the foundation of all sound historical theory Such investigation Vico was the first to attempt Machiavelli made it sufficiently obvious that it ought to be undertaken, but there is no evidence that he himself felt any distinct need of what his whole treatise proved to be necessary The most general thought to which he attained regarding the course of human affairs was that all nations, if left to themselves, will pass through nearly the same succession of states, and that thus their histories will resemble each other as wholes no less than in particulars He believed that history moved in cycles, of which the different stages are the different forms of government Enough may now, perhaps, have been said to show that Machiavelli was one of Vico's precursors [1]

[1] For a full and admirable account of Machiavelli's political and historical writings, the English reader can now be referred to the third and fourth volumes of Villari's 'Niccolo Machiavelli and his Times'

Campanella may have been another Although Vico has not referred to his writings, he cannot have been ignorant of them They contain many ideas which he himself held. As regards history, in particular, the views of Campanella approximated still more closely than those of Machiavelli to Vico's Campanella and Vico, indeed, took up substantially the same position towards Machiavelli Both studied his works and accepted and developed some of his leading ideas, and both were declared enemies of "Machiavellism." While Machiavelli looked on religion solely with the eyes of a positivist and politician, regarding it merely as a historical fact of a secondary order and a political instrument, not concerning himself as to its truth, ignoring the divine power, wisdom, and love as facts of history, Campanella, an even more ardently religious nature than Vico, saw in God the radical unity of all existence, the *causa omnium causarum*, the Ruler and Guide of humanity, and in piety towards God the primal bond of society, the vital principle of civil life. Man, according to his conception, is part of a universe in which all true being is divine being In the Infinite Being there are, he affirms, three primal properties—power, wisdom, and love, and being extends only so far as they extend—might, truth, and goodness only so far as being extends The primal properties of the Godhead are the sources of eternal ideas, of the blessed angels, of immortal human souls, of space and all that it contains of reality; but in so far as anything is finite and temporary, untrue and unreal, it is not by being but by non-being, which mingles more and more with being the further the world of time and sense is prolonged. Weakness is the nega-

tion of the power, hatred of the love, ignorance of the wisdom of God All evil is simply negation And by negation itself good is effected Hunger drives men over the earth and compels them to labour, wants give rise to all the arts and sciences, wars destroy tyrants; error excites to the investigation of truth. Thus evil is everywhere the occasion of its opposite

God is, however, to use Campanella's own expression, not only physically but also politically the first cause of nations and governments, and, in a word, of historical development The three chief political or historical causes are God, prudence or good policy, and opportunity or good fortune In some nations the working of one of these is more apparent, in others another Thus the hand of God is specially manifest in the history of the Jews, political wisdom in that of the Romans, and fortune in that of Spain. It is God, however, who gives good fortune, and no political foresight or skill is sufficient in every conjuncture to discover and follow the proper course of conduct Hence all nations have felt a sense of dependence upon God, and expressed it in some way, wise or foolish Religion is essential to the existence of society It is with the corruption of religion that the dissolution of society invariably commences Heresy, which breaks religious unity, disorganises also the political constitution, disperses and destroys the forces of social life. It leads on to scepticism and atheism, which complete the utter ruin of every civilisation they get possession of, which break every bond that attaches man to man. The human race is, however, not entirely forsaken of God even in its times of deepest darkness The very excess of its degradation and misery

prepares it for the acceptance of the appropriate remedy, compels men to seek after a new unity, to listen to a new legislator, and gradually submit themselves to the laws of a new theocracy There is thus a cyclical movement in the history of religions, in the religious life of each state, and in the religious development of mankind Beginning with unity—that is, with a papacy or theocracy—it passes through divers stages or forms of heresy to atheism, whence it is driven back to unity [1] These three stages—theocracy, heresy, and atheism—recur alike in the history of pagan, Mohammedan, and Christian nations The political movement is also a cycle Its stages are monarchy, the various forms of government in which the sovereignty is divided and consequently enfeebled, and democracy, which results in monarchy again. The two cycles—the religious and political—are interdependent and concentric To each stage in the one there is a precisely correspondent stage in the other. These cycles are not inconsistent with the indefinite progress of the human race, but are comprehended in an ever-widening and ever-advancing movement which will end in the cessation of all evils, and in the union of all nations under the government of the Messiah

Such was the historical theory of Campanella. How closely it resembles that of Vico the reader will soon be able fully to determine

[1] "Religiones cunctæ atque sectæ habent proprium circulum, veluti et respublicæ ex monarchia in tyrannidem, inde in aristocratiam, inde in oligarchiam, inde in politiam, inde in democratiam, ac denuo tandem in monarchiam revertuntur per easdem aliasque vias. Sic cum sectæ ad atheismum pervenerint, extrema populorum mala suboriuntur, ireque Dei culmen exindeque in statum bonum, sed per pœnas, revertuntur"—Ph Real P T, iii. c. 8

Bodin must also be here mentioned Vico often refers to his writings, but the references do not give a just conception of the amount of his indebtedness to him, being mostly of a critical and polemical character Bodin was the first strongly to insist on the importance of connecting the history of law with that of history in general. The idea of a universal law, in which all bodies of law have their root and *rationale*, and of which they are but the multiple and partial expressions,—a universal law the knowledge of which can only be reached through the methodical study of history as a whole,—this idea, which proved so fruitful in the mind of Vico, was clearly and vigorously promulgated by Bodin. Bodin also preceded Vico in insisting on the importance of investigation into the origin of nations, on the uncertainty of the statements of historians as to the subject, and on the value of the study of language as a means of throwing light on facts relative to which there is either no written testimony or only such as is false He submitted anew to examination the question of political revolutions, and improved on the answers of Plato and Aristotle Although more the precursor of Montesquieu than of Vico, there can be no doubt of the large indebtedness—insufficiently acknowledged—of the latter to him.

Of the influence of Grotius on Vico I have already had occasion to speak. Bishop Bossuet I believe to have had no influence upon him. The 'Discours sur l'Histoire Universelle' was, indeed, published forty-four years before the first edition of the 'Scienza Nuova,' but the two works have almost nothing in common, and there is no evidence, external or internal, of the former having been read by the author of the latter

None of the writers who have just been mentioned had any notion of there being a special science of human history. Machiavelli, for example, made historical generalisations, but it was only with a view to political instruction. In like manner, the historical philosophy to be found in the writings of Campanella and Bodin was a part of their political philosophy, which they nowhere endeavoured to distinguish from other parts, to circumscribe and define These authors simply viewed history in relation to politics, as Bossuet viewed it in relation to religion Vico was the first to treat of it as the proper and exclusive subject of a special science. Hence the distance between him and the nearest of his predecessors was very great

CHAPTER IX

THE NEW SCIENCE

It has been already remarked that the first and second editions of the 'Scienza Nuova' vary so much as to be almost two different works. The first is decidedly the more pleasant to read, owing to its superior simplicity, naturalness, and freshness It bears the stamp and charm of recent creation, yet contains, in essentials, the entire New Science With its publication Vico's work in life was, in the main, accomplished As regards leading ideas and general doctrines, the second edition added to it little, if anything, which was altogether new If we had to choose between the analytic and inductive method of the first edition, and the synthetic and deductive method of the second, we would probably do well to prefer the former The particular applications and details in which the second edition abounds are in many cases far from felicitous From all this, however, we must not infer that the second edition is of little value, or even of less value than the first It contains nearly all that the first contains, and a great deal which it does not It is most interesting to see the same subject treated by two methods and presented in two forms.

The more deductive method is not really contradictory to the more inductive method, and it possesses certain advantages as well as disadvantages. The form into which the New Science is recast in the second edition is, if more artificial, also more elaborate, and the system is exhibited by it in a considerably more developed, while not radically changed, condition. Many of the applications in it are highly instructive, although not a few others are more calculated to amaze and amuse than to enlighten. Some very important questions are much much more adequately discussed in it.

The 'Scienza Nuova,' in both its forms, and especially in its second and most finished form, is a work which it is exceedingly difficult to analyse; for its main argument is complicated with innumerable details, and it is not always easy to trace the guiding thread which leads through the windings of its accessory ideas. The arid task of abridgment is one which I shall not undertake. I mean merely to direct attention to the leading ideas and results to be found in Vico's *magnum opus*. The plan of the distribution into books in the second edition will suffice to indicate the general order of discussion followed by Vico; but it is undesirable for my purpose to adhere strictly even to that. The first book lays down what are called the *principles* of the New Science; the second treats of what is designated *poetic wisdom*; the third is on *the discovery of the true Homer*; the fourth on *the course of nations*, and the fifth on *the revolutions of nations in a fixed orbit or cycle*. The first, fourth, and fifth books thus give us, as it were, the general theory of the science; the second, and, still more, the third book, are rather

discussions of special points of great importance to the general theory

One of the guiding convictions of Vico, as we have already seen, was the necessity of an alliance between reason and authority, the ideal and the empirical, in order to obtain a true knowledge of the nature of man and the development of society He was convinced that Descartes, in despising erudition and insisting that the way to attain to truth was to reason it out from an absolutely certain fact of the individual consciousness, had gone to an extreme, and done much harm He believed that he had abundant evidence before his own eyes that this setting up of the individual reason as the test and measure of all things led to ignorance, self-conceit, contempt of the past, &c. He thought more reliance should be placed on the common-sense of mankind, the unreflective judgment of a people, a nation, or the entire race. He deemed it necessary to unite the spirit and the letter, science and erudition For what he supposed to be the geometrical method, on the one hand, and the empirical on the other, he sought to substitute the combined and concurrent action of philosophy and philology Philosophy and philology embrace, according to Vico, the whole of human knowledge Philosophy is the science of the absolute and immutable, philology, which includes literature and history, of the relative and temporary. The former deals with the ideas which are the objects of reason, the latter with the facts which are produced by the human will. Philosophy, the science of the rational and the true, regards man as he ought to be, philology, the science of the actual and authoritative, views him as he is But these two must not be

allowed to remain apart in sterile separation, but must be brought into fertile union The truth implied in certainty, and the certainty which has its origin in truth, must be exhibited Authority must be shown to have had a warrant in reason, and reason must be shown to possess authority A philosophy which fails to find support for its conclusions in facts, and a philology which fails to discover the truth or reason in facts, must be one-sided, weak, and erroneous Philosophy needs the companionship of philology, and philology of philosophy, and they must be made one by legitimate marriage—by being so conjoined as to blend into a science which excludes nothing that belongs to either Such is the most important idea in the 'De Constantiâ Philologiæ,' and also the fundamental idea of the 'Scienza Nuova'

Our author's conception of philology is particularly interesting It will probably seem to most scholars in this country far too wide and vague, for we are accustomed only to much narrower acceptations of the word—as, for example, that philology is the art of elucidating and correcting ancient texts, or the critical study of classical literature, or the science of language. But all these views, it may be well for us to reflect, are generally deemed antiquated by the leading scholars of Germany, with whom it is a conviction that there must be a discipline, which may not inappropriately be termed philology, aiming at the learned reproduction of all that nations in their past lives have produced, and at the combination of all branches of antiquarian and historical lore into an organic unity This is the idea of philology for which the late illustrious August

Boeckh, one of the greatest philologists of the nineteenth century, has gained such wide acceptance in learned Germany Philology, as defined by him, is the systematic knowledge of what has been known, —*Erkenntniss des Erkannten—cogniti cognitio*[1] The view taken of it by Vico is substantially the same, "the knowledge of the speech and acts of peoples" (*la cognizione delle lingue e de' fatti de' popoli*)

Then, in connection with philology thus understood, it must be observed that he has laid great stress on the necessity and importance of criticism Strongly convinced of the insufficiency of mere erudition, he takes pleasure in ascribing all sorts of errors to the *eruditi*, and in tracing these errors to their conceit and credulity Despising such criticism as they professed to practise, he contends for a criticism which shall be far more exact and thorough, and, indeed, a truly philosophical art It must not content itself with merely dealing searchingly with books and facts, but must above all scrutinise the ideas of the human mind, the principles of the common nature of nations. In this its highest function, it coincides with metaphysics—*la critica del vero*—and with the study of the universal mind, in which religion, speech, customs, and all human events and institutions have their origin. Both reason and fact must be critically analysed in order to be united. The *Nova Scientia* demands a *Nova Critica*

[1] Boeckh presented and expounded his definition in the Transactions of the German Association of Philologists, Berlin, 1850 The most complete exhibition of his view is the 'Encyklopaedie und Methodologie der philologischen Wissenschaften,' edited by E. Bratuscheck in 1877 In this work I regret to find that Vico is not even once named

capable of dispelling the darkness of the mythic age, and exhibiting a "storia universale, certa e ragionata," which conforms to a "storia ideale eterna"

The precise position of Vico in the history of criticism is not difficult to discover There had been many critics before him, and Peter Bayle was a contemporary, although older by about twenty years, yet Vico had the merit of first clearly seeing that criticism must be more than the shrewd or sceptical treatment of particular questions,—that it must be a continuous and systematic process resting on philosophical principles, that it must be not merely a sifting of the facts of history, but equally the tracing and testing of the ideas which give them significance He was the first distinctly to perceive to how great an extent criticism must depend on psychology, and be of a psychological character On the other hand, he did not apparently conceive of criticism as entitled to a standing or province of its own He regarded it as simply an aspect of the New Science Unfortunately, also, many of his own critical attempts were very unfavourable illustrations of the new and higher criticism which he recommended [1]

The fundamental thought of the New Science—that of accounting for the development of humanity by combining the powers of philosophy and philology—finds its explanation, at least in part, in the conviction that the entire history of mankind is but the eternal idea of that history which existed in the divine mind realised and manifested in actual events Vico was of the kindred of Plato, Augustine, and Dante, with whom he

[1] As to Vico's views of criticism, see B Mazzarella, 'Della Critica,' vol i cap xv

maintained assiduous and intimate communion, and like whom he looked at all things in relation to the divine centre of existence God's idea, he believed, was never notwithstanding all the apparent confusion in human affairs, departed from, and it might be studied both in itself and in its disclosures of itself in historical occurrences,—ought to be studied in both, lest we take a conceit of our own mind for the plan of the divine mind The true philosophy of history, it seemed to him, lay, beneath and beyond all appearance, in the divine ideal The New Science, he has carefully argued, is essentially a vindication of the character and wisdom of God, "una teologia civile ragionata della Providenza Divina" It thus supplied, he thought, a great want Philosophers like the Epicureans and Stoics had recognised no true Providence, but either only an invisible chain of causes and effects or a blind concourse of atoms, and those who had recognised it had hitherto sought to demonstrate it exclusively from the physical order and phenomena of nature The New Science, however, will supply a continuous historical proof in the nature, succession, and results of events, that the affairs of the world are directed by divine power, wisdom, and goodness, without the assent or advice of men, and often in opposition to their plans Thus it will force the Epicurean to admit that his chance cannot work blindly and without rule, and the Stoic that his eternal chain of causes is grasped by an omnipotent, wise, and beneficent Will, while it will give the Christian a pious satisfaction in the contemplation of the laws which Providence has imposed on the world of nations through all the distance of places and all the variety of times

This view pervades the whole of the 'Scienza Nuova,' but is stated with special clearness in the last chapter of the first book. In order, however, to be rightly understood, it requires to be supplemented by another truth which Vico expresses in these words 'the civil world has certainly been made by men.' He did not lose sight of the human when tracing the divine in history. He sought to do justice to both, and to exhibit the one in relation to the other. He represents the plan of history at once as a plan which God has ordained and which man realises. He finds the principles of social movement in the modifications of the human mind. God is never immediately the cause of human actions; man himself is so as a secondary cause. Thus, although Vico has sometimes spoken of Providence as the foundation of the New Science, what he really means is that it is its conclusion. In expressing himself as he occasionally does on this subject, he merely fails to do justice to his own thought. He does not try to explain the facts by a doctrine of Providence, but to evolve a doctrine of Providence from the facts. He founds on no extra-historical plans or decrees, but endeavours to discover the ideas underlying history, and gradually brought more and more to light by its development. He insists that history philosophically studied leads up to a knowledge of the principles according to which God guides and governs the world of nations; that divine ideas are manifested through human actions; that the providence of God embraces all social events; but he does not overlook that a knowledge of the first cause must be attained through a knowledge of second causes; that the laws of the external facts of history must be dependent on the

internal laws of the mental faculties; that his New Science must be primarily an explanation of history by strictly human factors. While holding that history is at once the realisation of a divine plan and a product of human nature, he holds also that being the realisation of a divine plan through the faculties of human nature, the character of the plan can only be ascertained by a sufficiently profound and comprehensive study of the various phases of human development. As in contemplating history he perceives clear traces of the action both of God and man, his New Science is conceived of as both a theology and a sociology, but he does not confound these two He recognises that they are distinct, and takes, on the whole, a correct view of their relationship. He neither makes sociology dependent on theology, nor does he allow it to displace it. He was fully aware that historical events ought not to be explained theologically; that merely to assert that God caused these events for such and such purposes was futile; that there was no science in that, and if any theology, only theology of a bad kind, always arbitrary and arrogant in relation to God, and generally unjust and uncharitable in relation to men. On the other hand, he was not one of those who suppose that when the world of nations has been shown to be a product of the ideas, feelings, and volitions of men, it has been fully explained; on the contrary, he thought that the explanation itself as much needed explanation as what it had explained. He saw, or thought he saw, that what was realised in the course of the ages by the millions of individuals which compose humanity was a system of order so vast, comprehensive, and excellent, as to imply a

Supreme Will pervading, controlling, and using human wills,—

"A divinity which shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will."

When Vico speaks of God and providence, he often, although not always, means the idea of God and the idea of providence. The source of this ambiguity was his conviction that God works in man through the idea of Himself, and that providence is not so much to be regarded as outside of and above humanity as within it, in the very persuasion which men have of being under divine guidance. The education of man by God, it appeared to him, is to be seen in the apprehension of God by man. God is so immanent in man that providence itself is in one respect a human process. The control which the divine will exercises over human wills is accomplished by means of these wills themselves, without any external repression or constraint. Never in any age or nation has a single human mind shown capacities so large and motives so disinterested as to make the accomplishment of the divine plan in its full truth and extent the object of distinct contemplation, much less of persistent endeavour, yet the Absolute Reason needs no other agencies than these minds in order to effect its purpose. It requires not to stand apart from them and to guide them from without, as a shepherd his flock or a driver his steeds. It is not related to them so loosely as an architect is to the materials, or even to the builders, of an edifice of which he plans and directs the construction. It moves all history from within, simply by the human factors which compose it, and by strictly human motives, utilising even

the ignorance and selfishness, the prejudices and perversities of men "Thus, for example, although all mankind are distracted by the three vicious appetites of fierceness, avarice, and ambition, the divine Spirit so employs them as to give rise, in a natural human way, to a legislation which produces from them the army, commerce, and the court,—that is to say, strength, wealth, and the knowledge of government" The view which Vico gives of the relation of providence to history is accordingly quite distinct from that set forth by Bishop Bossuet in his 'Discours sur l'Histoire Universelle' It rests on a far truer and more profound insight into the nature of the relationship of humanity to God, and, ultimately, on a more consistent and spiritual idea of God as the Absolute Reason

One of the most important of Vico's general views was that the philosophy of history must be based on the knowledge of human nature He saw that his New Science must involve a history of human ideas What he attempted, therefore, while in one respect a civil theology, was in another a psychological history, explaining the growth of law, science, art, and religion by the progress of the human mind itself as it passes from sense to reason The thought which led him to do so—the thought of the self-identity of humanity, or, as he generally expressed it, of "the common nature of nations"—was the corner-stone of his whole system It was put forward even in the title of his work—'Principii di una Scienza Nuova d'intorno alla commune natura della nazioni,' and thence on to the last sentence its presence is everywhere to be felt That every individual man may say to every other, *ego homo sum quam tu*—that all nations

are of one blood and one spirit—that in all lands and ages human nature is essentially the same,—is the root principle to which all the other general principles of his doctrine can be directly referred It is an idea the history of which may almost be said to be the history of humanity itself, and therefore it was already, of course, a very old idea when it reached the mind of Vico, but he showed that he had seen in it a significance which had escaped all intellects except his own when he conceived and endeavoured to realise the original and magnificent design of explaining by it the world of nations,—of demonstrating the constant conformity of history to the constitutive laws of the human spirit Precisely this is what has entitled him to a conspicuous place in the history of one of the greatest of ideas, and which fixes, at the same time, his distinctive place in the general history of science

Because he held that all nations had thus a common nature, he believed that they must also have essentially similar histories, that, when left to themselves, they must everywhere pass through the same course of development For the same reason he assigned the greatest importance to the *common sense of nations*,—the natural and spontaneous expression of the common nature of their intelligence,—the source of the uniform ideas which arise simultaneously among peoples unknown to one another,—the providential criterion of the practical truth which is appropriate to their wants and circumstances. Hence also he regarded such axioms as the following,—(1) when the human mind, whose nature is indefinite, finds itself plunged in ignorance, it makes itself the rule of the universe, (2) when men know not

the natural causes of things, they attribute to them their own nature, (3) men conceive of the remote and obscure according to the analogy of the present and familiar, (4) imagination is more vigorous as reason is more weak, — as truths which must circulate through the New Science and vivify it, even as the blood pervades and animates the body.

It is now time to state some of the more important special doctrines of the New Science.

As regards the origin of the human race, Vico was content to acquiesce in the traditional view The conjectures of Paracelsus and of Cæsalpinus as to co-Adamites, and of Peyrère as to pre-Adamites, were unnoticed by him, and may have been unknown to him. If the notion of a descent of man by natural development from animal progenitors had suggested itself to his mind, he would doubtless have rejected it. He had no thought of a continuous and all-comprehensive biological evolution, in the course of which species are gradually produced by the accumulation of slight modifications, and still less of a necessary and universal cosmical evolution, in which such biological evolution is included and implied. He was, therefore, not a direct precursor of Laplace, Lamarck, and Darwin. But he certainly helped to prepare the way for them. For he grasped with rare firmness and power the idea of *development* in human history, and probably no previous thinker had felt so strongly the importance of the problems as to social origins. This was in strict conformity with the general tenor of his philosophy, and particularly with his theory of knowledge, in which it was a fundamental principle that "the nature of things consists only in their origina-

tion at a certain time and in certain ways" (Opere, v 99) This principle he earnestly applied within his own special sphere of speculation, endeavouring to determine the circumstances and conditions of the origin of thought, speech, religion, morality, families, peoples, ranks, customs, &c, as of the greatest philosophical and practical interest. A large number of the attempts which have been made to explain the course and significance of human history have originated chiefly in a desire to forecast the future of our race or to justify some scheme of social regeneration It was not so with that of Vico He was too timid to concern himself with plans of religious or political revolution or even reform He was far from a hopeful man, either for himself or for humanity Constitutionally melancholy, personal disappointments had deepened his sense of the vanity of human wishes, and left him without confidence in the power of the mind to foresee coming events His gaze was turned almost entirely backwards From a mean and needy present his spirit found an outlet and asylum not in the uncertain dreamland of the future, but in the past, which, however dark it might have become, had once been real and bright. It, he felt, might still be brought to light, and his ambition was to help to bring it to light even from the beginning

How, then, did Vico conceive of the origin of civilisation? In a way which rather curiously combined the traditional conception of man's primitive state, drawn from the first two chapters of Genesis, and the hypothesis, so much in favour at present, that human progress started from a state of barbarism and brutality While he accepted as true the Biblical account of paradisiacal

man, he supposed the Fall and the Flood to have deprived the progenitors of the heathen nations of the world of almost every attribute of humanity. He imagined them to have lost the use of all the higher faculties characteristic of man; to have ceased to have any religious notions, to have become incapable of speech, to have taken to walk on all-fours as frequently as on their legs, to have retained, however, their animal instincts and passions, and even, for reasons which are given, but which it would be unprofitable to repeat, to have increased notably in bodily size and strength. Vico's giants, whom he identifies, of course, with the giants of the book of Genesis, the Cyclops of Homer, and the Titans of Greek mythology, are the descendants of men, but rather beasts than men, being not even distinguished from other mammals by a habitually erect posture and bipedal progression, enormously strong, hairy, filthy, ferocious, solitary, speechless, godless, with no sense of duty, without bonds of marriage, not burying their dead, &c. Perhaps they are not represented as quite so far removed from modern civilised men as those anthropoid apes from whom rigid Darwinians believe us to have descended, and for whose bones palæontologists are diligently searching, but they are certainly represented as far lower and ruder, far nearer to the brutes, than any tribes of men have been found to be within historic times. The description given of them, and even of their surroundings,—for they are supposed to have lived during a diluvial period, among woods and marshes,—closely resembles that given of primitive men by many modern ethnologists.

It has to be noted, however, that he drew a broad

line of demarcation between the giants, who were the founders of the Gentile nations, and the men of natural size, who were the progenitors of the Hebrews The latter he did not suppose to have been, at any stage, barbarians He unhesitatingly accepted the Biblical accounts of primeval times, deemed the chronology based on the Biblical records perfectly satisfactory, and expressly denied that Egypt, China, or any other nation, could fairly claim nearly as high an antiquity as the Jews And yet he practically excluded Jewish history from the New Science He did not merely represent Jewish history as having been confined to a channel so exclusively its own that it neither received anything from, nor contributed anything to, the culture of other peoples, although he maintained this in explicit terms, rejecting alike decidedly the hypothesis of Marsham and Spencer, that the first principles of Hebrew wisdom had been derived from Egypt, and that of those who, like Steucho, Selden, More, and Cudworth, supposed all Greek philosophy to have had its source in Hebrew tradition In this respect, however, he only dealt with the Hebrews as he did with all other peoples For he would not admit that any nation had derived its science, law, art, or religion from another But in regard to Israel he went further he held that it, and it alone, could not come within the scope of a science of history, that its special calling withdrew it from subjection to general laws The New Science, as conceived by Vico, has to do exclusively with the development of humanity in heathendom, under the guidance only of God's natural providence He failed to reach, or refused to entertain, the idea that special revelation, when it enters the sphere

of a nation's life, may become subject to the laws of historical development, which are grounded on the general system of the world It displays great want of discernment to say, as has been often said, that the general thought in Lessing's famous essay on "The Education of Mankind" is but a repetition of that which pervades the New Science Lessing, in reality, emphasises precisely what Vico ignores. His stages of human education and historical development are those very phases of religion of which Vico, as a philosopher, refuses to take any account In this respect we may affirm that, if the view of Lessing be the more rationalistic, it is also the more religious Not less grave is the error on the point specified, into which a distinguished author, M Laurent, has fallen, when he denies all scientific character to the 'Scienza Nuova,' because its author believed in Adam and the Fall, Christ and the incarnation. One might well have fancied that even so determined a foe of special revelation as M. Laurent would have been satisfied by Vico's complete extrusion of his supranaturalistic beliefs from the sphere of his philosophy of history And yet, perhaps it was an act which had only a single recommendation. It allowed our author to ignore a class of problems which he could not have safely discussed in the Naples of his day In the few references which he permits himself to make to Hebrew history, his aim is to indicate its differences from other history, as regards the Gentile nations, his eye is always on the watch for resemblances

Let us come back to the giants—for it is with them that history, so far as Vico professes to explain it, begins Plainly he had the same difficulties before him as our

modern ethnologists. The lower tribes of savage men scattered over the world, even although they have not lost the human use of such members as the legs and tongue, and are not wholly uncontrolled by social, moral, and religious bonds, are not seen to civilise themselves; their tendency appears to be to sink, not to rise; it is only with difficulty that they can even be drawn up to a higher level by the efforts of cultured men. How, then, are those who have everything to learn—speech, reflection, morality, religion—and who have none to teach them, none to help them, to acquire the first rudiments of all human civilisation? This is a problem with which contemporary science is diligently occupied; and Vico deserves some credit for having seen it with clearness, and for having endeavoured to solve it. He was at least not unsuccessful in attracting attention to it. His speculations on the origin of civilisation gave rise to a controversy, in which many took part who manifested no interest in his more general doctrines.[1] That these speculations should constitute any very satisfactory solution of the problem discussed was not to be expected. Only enthusiasts, I imagine, suppose that we have even at present any certain or complete solution of it.

The first impulse to civilisation came, according to

[1] They were assailed by Romano in his 'Quattordici Lettre sul terzo principio della Scienza Nuova,' 1749, by Finetti in his 'Sommario delle opposizioni del Sistema Ferino di Vico alla Sacra Scrittura,' &c., 1777, and by Rogadei in his 'Del antico Stato da popoli dell Italia Cistiberina,' &c., 1780, and defended by Duni and others. Those who favoured them were known as the *Ferini*, and those who opposed them as the *Antiferini*. It may be worth noting that the same controversy was waged in Scotland at the same period. The chief Scottish representative of "the wild men" was Lord Kames, and their chief antagonist was Dr Doig.

Vico, from fear As the diluvial earth dried up there were violent thunderstorms, the terrors of which worked a mighty change on the minds of some of the giants, causing them to regard the heavens as angry, to feel that there was a supernatural power above them, and to take refuge, male and female, in caves and grottoes The consciousness of a divine presence was accompanied by a sense of shame, which checked brutal lust, and led to the formation of families. Society had thus for its constitutive principle religion No other principle, it seemed to Vico, could reasonably be deemed sufficiently powerful to subdue savage men, and to unite them into a social group There could, he thought, be no tribes, no societies, without religion, and religion he supposed to have been occasioned, so far as it was of heathen origin, by terror "Primus in orbe Deos fecit terror"[1] This is a very old opinion, and has been often maintained From the point of view of Vico it was a very natural opinion If religion originated in the minds of such beings as Vico's giants, or the primitive men of many modern ethnologists, terror can scarcely fail to have been largely concerned in its origination Fear is an element in religion In the highest forms of religion there is latent a refined filial fear Only when all danger of offending God has ceased, only when love is perfect, will all fear be cast out of religion The lower forms of religion are, of necessity, largely characterised by the presence of fear It is impossible, therefore, reasonably to decide whether or not objects of terror, motives of fear, occasioned the rise of religion, until it is known when and with whom

[1] Statius, Thebais, iii. 661

he meant a moral, responsible, properly human personality. According to many evolutionists, man must have been long upon the earth before he learned to draw a distinction between the natural and the supernatural, the human and the divine. This tenet Vico himself so far adopted, but he supplemented it in a way which greatly altered its character. He thought he saw the stage at which the distinction must be drawn, and the consequences which must follow from drawing it. It could only be, he believed, when men passed from a merely natural or brutal life to a properly rational or human life, and must imply all that was involved in that momentous transition. Man's earliest apprehension of divinity would thus be simultaneous with his first experience of a truly human thought,—with the dawn of the self-consciousness which is presupposed in the feeling of dependence and the sense of shame,—and with the origin of speech and the formation of family groups.[1]

The consciousness of the divine, once aroused as has been described, continued awake and active. Setting imagination to work, it gradually built up a world of the gods in which were reflected the chief features and stages of the primitive history of human society. That world

[1] The beautiful exposition which Schelling, in the 'Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology,' gives of the idea that language and especially religion make peoples, and the not less beautiful exposition which Ferrier, in the 'Introduction to the Philosophy of Consciousness,' gives of the idea that "*thinking* one's self 'I' *makes* one's self 'I,'" will enable the reader to realise the significance of Vico's thought much better than any other commentary, for they are related to it in nature as twin flowers to a common seed, although, of course, both Schelling and Ferrier had in their minds no remembrance of Vico when they developed his conception.

philologists of the present day agree in affirming that there was a specially myth-producing period—one during which peoples could not but speak and think mythically—and they are daily adding to our knowledge of the mental life of the men of that period Vico discovered where this long-lost world lay, and gave some suggestive indications as to how farther acquaintance with it was to be gained. Mythology, as viewed by his contemporaries, appeared to be merely a rubbish-heap, composed of waste, worthless, and foul products of mind, but he perceived that it contained the materials for a science which would reflect the mind and history of humanity, and even asserted some general principles as to how these materials were to be interpreted and utilised, which have since been established, or at least endorsed, by Heyne, Creuzer, C O Muller, and others

Unfortunately—I must add—if some of his views on mythology were remarkably sagacious, others were baseless or even absurd. One error, especially, pervaded and vitiated his whole mythological doctrine While with profound discernment he perceived not only that there had been a mythical period, but that the period had been a prolonged one, with subordinate eras to which corresponded different gods, and different families and classes of gods, he went far astray when he concluded that the gods were the reflections of human events, and mythology only the symbolical history of primitive man The divine was not conceived of, even in the earliest times, as simply a representation of the human Although the development of primitive society can be traced in the development of primitive religion, the latter is not to be supposed to have been directly the mirror or shadow of

the former The twelve great gods of Rome—the *Dii majorum gentium*—were certainly not what they are maintained, with so much waste of labour and ingenuity, by Vico to have been, the symbols and personifications of twelve different stages of social existence And very strange, indeed, are some of the devices to which he has had recourse to establish this singular thesis One example may suffice It has often been selected before, but is so characteristic that we need not hesitate to make it do service once again Heaven by its thunders called forth the idea of divinity, elicited a sense of shame, and founded human society This first idea of Deity took form and shape in Jupiter, the first of the great gods But the second result of the apprehension of a divine presence and power in the universe was marriage—the settled and religious union of man and woman. Hence Juno, the goddess of marriage, was the second divine character or person and she was represented as the wife and sister of Jupiter, because marriages were solemnised after the taking of the auspices, as clothed, because emblematic of modesty, as barren, because women do not found families, as jealous, because the right of contracting regular marriages speedily became the privilege of a class, and was feigned to have been hung up in the air, because it is in the air that auspices are read,—with a cord round her neck, to indicate the tie that attaches wedded pairs—and with two great stones at her feet, to signify that marriage is of a stable and indissoluble nature All this, and much more, Vico has set forth, without the slightest intention of joking, and in the full conviction that he thereby proved that the myth of Juno was a symbol of the institution and history of marriage

The terrors which gave rise to religion or superstition in the minds of a number of the giants, also, he thought, unloosened to some extent their tongues, and led to the invention of speech Language was attained, and has been evoked, only slowly and gradually, as the mind itself has grown and developed Signs and gestures preceded words The first terms were monosyllables. The first letters were pictures The first speaking was singing Poetry is older than prose Words and myths are intimately related. Speech is the truest mirror of the character of man, and by far the oldest record of his history. These ideas of Vico are ingenious and suggestive, and interesting as anticipations of later research and speculation. He failed, as a matter of course, to solve the formidable problem of the origin of speech, but he had profound views as to the philosophy of language, and he divined with wonderful sagacity how indispensable it was to analyse and investigate in a new and comprehensive manner the phenomena of language in order to understand the human mind and human history As Moses from the top of Pisgah saw the land of promise into which his people had not yet entered, so Vico, from the serene height of his own solitary thoughts, beheld the vast and rich country into which our comparative philologists and comparative psychologists are now leading us

He saw it, however, only from a distance, and in outline While his view of the relation of speech to thought was profound—while no one before him had recognised so truthfully the connection between philology and philosophy—his acquaintance with languages was unfortunately not great Hence his etymologies were generally

incorrect, and whatever he wished them to be Hence he fell far behind Leibniz in his conception of the relationship of languages to one another, and still farther behind him as regards perception of the method in which language must be studied in order that there may be a science of language Like Lully, Dalgarno, Watkins, and Leibniz, he formed the plan of a universal mental language—an *etymologicum universale*—expressive of all the common and essential ideas of humanity, but he did not so elaborate and illustrate it as to make it necessary, or indeed possible, for us to discuss its character

Vico took a particularly firm grasp of one of the truths most essential to the comprehension of history, yet one which even many recent theorists have ignored or inadequately recognised—the truth, namely, that all the constituent elements of human nature, all the great factors of human life, are evolved contemporaneously and not successively He saw that social development is a general or collective movement, inclusive of a number of particular developments, which are not mere stages of the general development, but pervade it from beginning to end, running parallel to one another, and acting and reacting on one another He saw that in order to know any one important phase of man's nature or history in a philosophical manner, all others must be in some measure known, that in history one faculty, or group of faculties, is not developed after another, seeing that humanity moves always and everywhere as a whole, the life of the whole flowing through each part This was the obvious and sufficient reason for his assigning to all the special manifestations of human nature a history in three stages corresponding to the three ages of

the general historical movement This was why he sought to show that there were three kinds of nature, three types of character, three epochs of religion, three species of language, of writing, of governments, of natural law, of jurisprudence, of legal judgments, &c To attribute his doing so, as several critics have done, to a fanciful affection for the number three, is evidence either of superficiality of mind or want of consideration

While clearly recognising the intimate connection of the various elements and phases of history, Vico failed to perceive how closely nations are related to one another Humanity appeared to him more as an aggregate and less as an organism of nations than it really is He held that all nations which have been left to themselves—that all nations except the Jewish—have passed through the same course of development, have had essentially similar histories, have exemplified one general law He decidedly rejected the notion of one nation having derived its science, law, arts, &c, from another, and accounted for the resemblances in national character by supposing human nature to have unfolded itself in different peoples similarly although independently

Now it said much for his perspicacity, much for his independence and originality of mind, that he should have seen so clearly the untenableness of the hypothesis, prevalent in his time, and not absolutely extinct in ours, that the religion, wisdom, and civilisation of the classical and oriental nations of pagan antiquity had their origin in the events and revelations recorded in the Book of Genesis He did well when he rejected the stories about Greece receiving its culture from Egypt, and Rome from Greece He was right in supposing

these stories mainly due to national vanity It is true, as he maintained, that only by a process of independent and original self development can any nation become great and influential, that the self-development of each nation has many general resemblances to the self-development of all other nations, owing to the fact that human nature is everywhere human nature, and that many particular resemblances which at first view will seem to be explicable only by derivation or transmission, will be found, on examination, to be really due to independent development in analogous circumstances But, on the other hand, researches, the results of which even Vico with all his power of divination could not foresee, have completely established that human civilisation is much more of an organic whole, and much less of an inorganic complex or aggregate, than he supposed They have shown that to conceive of history as merely the sum of a number of histories, starting from distinct beginnings, flowing in isolated beds, and disappearing only to be succeeded by others running the same course, is a very incorrect and inadequate mode of regarding it They have proved, beyond all possibility of doubt, that the histories, the civilisations of India, Persia, Greece, and Rome, as well as of Slave, and Celt, and Teuton, had a common source, that the progenitors of the so-called Aryan nations once formed a single people, and had advanced as a single people far from a mere beginning in language, religion, social and political sense, and general intelligence, before their separation. They have not, indeed, completely disproved Vico's hypothesis of a number of independent beginnings It is still scientifically undetermined whether all civilisations issued

from a single prehistoric root, or whether different families of civilisations sprang from as many separate forms, related in principles, but independent in origin. They have shown it to be certain, however, that there are families of civilisations, and that there was not an absolute commencement of civilisation for each separate nation. Besides, whatever may be thought of the community or diversity of origin of nations, the history of humanity is obviously the history of an articulated whole of nations, of a system of coexistent and connected groups of nations. Each nation, each group, is a part of a complicated unity, and manifoldly related to other parts and to the whole. Nations cannot be reasonably regarded as merely working out an isolated and particular result; but they are members one of another, and the organs of a common humanity, working out a common result, and conspiring to a comprehensive issue. They not only possess a common nature which manifests itself in each one of them, but they are pervaded by a universal life, and in many ways influence the action and contribute to the progress of one another. This Vico failed sufficiently to realise, and hence his conception of the common nature of nations was by no means an adequate conception of humanity.

The course of historical development along which, according to his view, each nation passes, has three great stages. These three stages, he himself tells us, on the authority of Herodotus, were known to the Egyptians, who divided time into three epochs or ages—that of the gods, that of the heroes, and that of men. He also reminds us that Varro had adopted this division—his *obscure time* being *the period of the gods*, his *fabulous*

time the period of the heroes, and his *historical time the period of men* Vico's distribution of ages was therefore avowedly borrowed One merit of it in his eyes was, that it was Egyptian. What he borrowed, however, was merely the formula, which in itself was of very trifling significance The worth of what he has written regarding the course and epochs of human development is entirely due to his having passed from any mere abstract formula to concrete application, especially as regards the histories of Greece and Rome He can by no means be said to have proved that the formula is universally applicable He admitted that Assyria, for example, was only known to have existed in one of the three stages, and that the other two could only be conjecturally affirmed on the ground that a law of three stages had elsewhere prevailed Even as regards Italy, he represented the age of the gods as an epoch not of Roman history proper, but one prior to Roman history In order to prove that the histories of the chief peoples of the ancient world ran parallel to one another, and so corresponded that the stage of gods in one people was synchronous with the same stage in other peoples, and in like manner the stages of heroes and men, he did great violence to chronology, without succeeding, as his own table shows, in establishing the thesis

The entire course of historical development he held to have been determined by certain principles, chief among which are the belief in Divine Providence, a sense of the need of some tie between the sexes, and reverence for the dead springing from a hope of future life They have given rise to the institutions of religion, to marriage rites, and funeral ceremonies These are the true *fœdera*

humanitatis. They are essential to the maintenance and progress of society They draw individuals into, and retain them in, society. They attach earth to heaven, they link generation to generation, they connect the present with the past, and lead men onwards step by step into the future. Vico ingeniously describes how the principles mentioned have been gradually unfolded, how their manifestations have varied from age to age, and how, notwithstanding this, they have continuously kept in relation to one another

As only a very limited space now remains at my disposal, any account which I can give of his views regarding the three great stages of history must be extremely brief. The first stage was what he calls the age of the gods, or the divine age In this age man, he held, was rude, fierce, emotional, endowed with a strong sense of the presence of the divine, although incapable of conceiving of it except as in visible things and forms, and gifted with an unregulated but vigorous and creative imagination. It was the age in which the family was instituted, in which language originated, in which myths were produced, and in which the chief rudiments of civilisation were brought to light. The father of the family was in this age also king and priest He ruled as the delegate of heaven, the will of which he sought to ascertain by divination, auspices, and oracles. Unable as yet to distinguish otherwise than most vaguely between the physical and the spiritual, or between things and thoughts, men in the primeval age regarded the phases and aspects of nature as themselves divine existences or divine actions, and conceived of the creations of their own imaginations as corporeal animated realities. They

raised their eyes to the heaven or sky above them and believed that they saw a great living being looking down upon them in favour or anger When they heard thunders and saw lightnings they believed that this being, Zeus or Jove, the first god of all the nations, was speaking to them, as they spoke to one another, by signs, gestures, motions, cries, and they were anxious to know what he meant This anxiety or curiosity—the daughter of ignorance and the mother of science—found at first satisfaction in divination, the oldest form of theology, mythology, the science of the language of the gods. All things were soon brought within the sphere of this primeval science, for all things soon came to be regarded as indications of the will of Deity, as parts of the language of Zeus *Jovis omnia plena* The objects which men at this stage deified were those by which they expressed their thoughts At first, if they wished to say sky or sea, they pointed to them, later, they said Jove or Neptune The thirty-two thousand names of Greek and Latin gods composed the oldest or divine vocabulary of these two peoples, and originally were not spoken words, but real objects and actions. *Numina* became *nomina* All life was religious, but it expressed itself in pantomimic signs, an imperfect form of language to which corresponded an imperfect form of writing, the sacred or hieroglyphic, very erroneously supposed in later times to have been the depository of recondite esoteric doctrines

The wisdom of the divine age had, according to Vico, nothing abstract or abstruse in it It was composed of sensation, of instinct, and of imagination, not of inference and reflection. It was a rude but sublime species of poetry The infancy of humanity was the most

poetical period in the life of the race,—the one in which imagination was most active and powerful—the one in which men were most generally poets, and poets most truly, what the term denotes, *creators*. The poets of the theological era not only ruled and moulded the minds of others by their vivid and terrible conceptions, but were themselves so impressed by these conceptions that they took them for realities, and prostrated themselves before them in faith and fear. *Fingunt simul creduntque.* While intensely imaginative and emotional, men were still at this stage extremely dark and savage in mind; and hence their religious notions were in many respects coarse and harsh, and their rites of divination often revoltingly cruel.

Vico had maintained in the 'De Constantiâ Jurisprudentis' that the formation of myths was a process which had four stages. In the first stage, material nature and the divine were identified. Jove was the sky, Diana running water, Neptune the sea, regarded at once as physical and as divine. In the second stage, natural human things—*e.g.*, the fire which man uses, the grain which serves him for food, the growing crops—were regarded as divine gifts and manifestations, and consequently there arose the myths regarding such deities as Vulcan, Ceres, and Saturn. In the third stage, the social or civil world was the great source of religious conceptions. Jupiter in this stage became the type of the heroic kings, Juno of their legitimate wives, Minerva of the warriors in council, &c. In the fourth stage, the world of gods was the counterpart of that of men, and its inhabitants were feigned to mingle with those of earth in the manner made familiar to us by Homer. This

hypothesis was never withdrawn Its leading principles were, on the contrary, several times reaffirmed in all forms of the 'Scienza Nuova' But the leading mythological hypothesis in the latter is the very different one to which reference has already been made—namely, that the ideas formed of the gods reflected social events According to this hypothesis, the divine age, which lasted some nine hundred years, comprehended a series of twelve lesser periods, in each of which appeared a representative deity It began with the period of Jupiter, during which the foundations of social existence were laid, and it closed with that of Neptune, when men ventured to trust themselves upon the sea. How the two hypotheses could be combined, Vico has not attempted to show They seem difficult to reconcile, and the earlier doctrine appears to be much the more valuable

It deserves to be noted that in describing the age of the gods our author insists on the analogy between the infancy of the individual and the infancy of the race, and he also draws many of his illustrations from the character and condition of savage peoples In these respects he was the predecessor of a multitude of later writers

The age of the gods has no fixed chronological limits It shades into, and is prolonged in, the second great age of history—the age of the heroes Thus the periods of Mercury and of Neptune, the eleventh and twelfth of the greater gods, belong rather to the heroic than to the divine age The heroic age originated in the subjection of that portion of mankind which had remained in a savage state to the fathers of the primitive families, who consequently became the rulers of communities in which

the members were unequal in their conditions and rights The increase in the number of slaves and dependants led to a series of struggles between the governed and the governing Slowly but steadily the former gained power and the latter lost it Against one aristocratic privilege after another there was successfully asserted some democratic right The various phases and results of the long contest between patricians and plebeians have been diffusely dwelt on by Vico In connection with them he has thrown out a multitude of ingenious thoughts suggested by his reflections on Roman history

In the heroic age, while the mythological language of the divine age was largely retained, a distinctive language was invented, consisting of heraldic emblems and devices on the weapons, &c, of the heroes, and of metaphors and comparisons in their articulated speech For example, a man of the heroic age could not say, *I am angry*, but had to express the fact by signs which had only an indirect reference to thought, perhaps by the words, *my blood boils in my veins* Metaphor, visibly represented or audibly uttered, was the basis of the heroic language At this stage the rudiments of theology and of all other wisdom were still taught by poets, but the heroic poets were a very different race from the theological poets who preceded them The great representative and type of a heroic poet is Homer In his poems the whole heroic "wisdom"—the whole heroic world—has been gloriously displayed, hence their immortal and unparalleled interest. They must be studied not merely as the products of individual genius, but as the creation and revelation of a marvellous age which, if it had not raised this monument to itself, would have passed into

oblivion and left the history of humanity hopelessly unintelligible.

Government, in the heroic age, was aristocratic, law was based on the force of the heroes, who were, however, controlled by the fear of the gods, sacerdotal justice gave place to the duel and retaliation, in ceremonies, compacts, and judicial procedure, a scrupulous and religious regard was paid to particular words and formulæ, types of character were personified as individuals,—*e.g.*, inventive intelligence in Hermes, heroism in Hercules, and poetry in Homer, and entire epochs of civilisation were summed up and represented in single rulers, so that the imaginary kings of Rome have descended to us as historical persons.

In spite of many faults and defects, many fanciful and disfiguring traits, Vico's picture of the heroic age must be pronounced a work of great, of unique genius. It surpassed all Greek and Roman [illegible], showing how little the classical world had comprehended even its own Homer, and how far from having been exhausted was the [illegible] of that world itself. It displayed [illegible] of critical and constructive power [illegible] and imaginative [illegible]

[illegible]

began with the seven sages; in Roman history, only with the destruction of Carthage In the third or human age writing is alphabetical, language is positive and precise, composition, alike in the form of prose and poetry, is natural and rational, manners are comparatively gentle and refined, civil and political equality are extended, and natural right more honoured than mere legality, justice is administered by tribunals, governments are democracies, or combinations of democracy and monarchy, myths fade away and are forgotten, religion is purified, and aims at diffusing morality, but tends also to extinction in scepticism, and to give place to philosophy

The human age also comes to a close Refinement issues in effeminacy Even where civil equality is universally and fully attained, there will still be great inequality as regards wealth, and from that inequality will flow the most grievous evils—luxury and corruption in the rich, envy and aggression in the poor, general discord and disorder For these evils the remedy which Providence sometimes supplies is a monarchy Some Cæsar rises up who proves capable of protecting society from the worst effects of its own evil passions, and of satisfying in some tolerable measure its legitimate desires, and he succeeds in substituting his own will for the law which democratic licence had rendered vain The corruption of a nation may advance so far, however, that no remedy can be found within itself, but must come from without, and in such a case a nation is either subdued by a foreign enemy or sinks into barbarism The conquest of one nation by another takes the conquered people back to the stage of history which the conquering people has attained The justification of conquest lies, according to Vico, in "the

others. It was held, for example, by the two chief political thinkers in Italy who preceded him,—Machiavelli and Campanella It may be held in two principal forms, the one compatible and the other incompatible with freedom and progress Thus, as regards coexistent nations, the cycles may be supposed to be either identical or merely similar I do not know, however, that any one has ventured to choose the former alternative Certainly Vico, when he maintained that the histories of Greece and Rome passed through the same cycle of ages, did not mean that there was more than a general similarity between the histories themselves Then, as regards the succession of cycles in time, each complete cycle may be supposed to be merely a repetition of the others, or the cycles may be supposed to vary, in which case it may be deemed that each later cycle will be grander and better than that which preceded it The former view is ascribed to the Stoics, and was at least consistent with the principles of their fatalism. Unless misrepresented, many of the Stoics believed, to use Cudworth's words, "that in the several revolutions and successive circuits or periods of worlds, all things should be *ἀπαράλλακτα*, 'exactly alike,' to that which had been infinitely before, and should be again infinitely afterwards" This view, so far as history is concerned, has also been considered to have been that of Machiavelli, but on very insufficient grounds It was certainly not that of Campanella. He made it quite clear that he regarded the cycles as the successive stages of a progressive movement which was to end in the cessation of all evils and in the union of all nations under the government of the Messiah.

In what form was the belief in cycles of historical

change held by Vico? The question, strange to say, has seldom been asked, and almost universally it has been assumed that his cycles could only be monotonous repetitions of each other, or, in other words, that he who so often distinctly condemned Stoic fatalism, yet accepted one of its dreariest consequences If he did so, he did it in violation of his own fundamental principles He avowed firm faith in a Providence ever seeking what is best, he strongly maintained the freedom of the human will both in relation to divine grace and to divine law, he believed in the perpetuity, the coming triumphs, and the surpassing excellence of Christianity, he saw in history the grandest of all vindications of the ways of God How could he, then, adopt a view which would warrant us to sum up the teachings of all history in these lines of the poet?—

> "There is the moral of all human tales,
> 'Tis but the same rehearsal of the past
> First freedom, and then glory—when that fails,
> Wealth, vice, corruption, barbarism at last,
> And history with all her volumes vast
> Hath but one page."

I do not think that he adopted any such dreary view He held that ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome alike passed through a cycle of three stages, but he nowhere represented these three histories as precisely alike. He fully recognised that each nation had its own individuality, that the events and the personages of one nation were not repetitions of those of another, but had each a special character of its own [1] Why suppose, then, that

[1] In regard to Vico's conception of nationality may be consulted S Mancini's 'Intorno alla Nazionalità come fondamento del Diritto delle genti,' 1851

he fancied the histories of modern Italy, Germany, and Spain had been, or were to be, mere repetitions of those of ancient nations? I can find no warrant for ascribing to him so absurd an opinion He deemed feudalism sufficiently like the heroic age of Greece to be accounted a second heroic age, but he was not ignorant that these two ages had great differences He thought Dante might be regarded as another Homer, but he did not imagine that all that he had affirmed about Homer he could reaffirm about Dante He held that the ethnic religions arose, flourished, and decayed, but also that Christianity as a revealed religion was not subject to this law. It must be admitted that he has not spoken clearly or hopefully regarding the future, but that does not justify the common representation that he believed the future would be a mere dull plagiarism of the past, without any new disclosures of the glory of God and of the capacities of man If he had supposed that the future would merely rehearse the past, he would naturally have had no hesitation in anticipating what it would utter His whole attitude towards the future seems irreconcilable with the notion that he imagined it would be the transcript of a page which had been already written. His belief in cycles or *ricorsi* was, indeed, inconsistent with a belief in continuous progress in a straight line, but not with advance on the whole, not with a gradually ascending spiral movement, and still less did it imply that any cycle was perfectly like another, and that history merely repeated itself

The view which Vico took of the future was not tinged with glowing colours—was not characterised by the enthusiastic hopefulness in which so many historical

theorists have indulged He was not of a hopeful or joyous disposition, he had a deep sense of the limits and defects of human nature, and of the evils and afflictions incident to human life, he was keenly aware of the gloomy and perplexing features of history, he was convinced that all nations tended to decay, death, and corruption yet he was no pessimist; nay, he was an avowed and decided optimist, firmly believing that all that happened was for the best, and that the severest sufferings of humanity were of a remedial and educative character Even the punishments which destroy nations he held to be needed, the most savage passions, he maintained, could be shown to have been made instruments of good, and the darkest superstitions he regarded as approximations to truth, and as instructive even in so far as false. "Nelle stesse tenebre degli errori splende Iddio"

NOTE

THERE is a very extensive "Vico Literature" The fullest accounts which have been given of it are those of Cantoni in his 'Vico,' and of Siciliani in his 'Rinnovamento'

The writings of Vico have, of course, been much more studied, and have exercised much more influence, in Italy than in any other country. The author of the present volume hopes soon—in the second volume of his 'Philosophy of History in Europe'—to trace with fulness and in detail the effects of Vico's historical speculations on Italian thought. Here it seems unnecessary to occupy space with a list of Italian books, many of which are very difficult to procure, and not to be found in this country even in a library like that of the British Museum

Nowhere out of Italy has Vico been studied with so much intelligence and sympathy as in France What of European reputation he possesses, is very largely due to M Michelet's 'Œuvres Choisies de Vico' Michelet most wisely renounced the idea of a literal rendering, and applied himself to reproduce with faithfulness and vividness the substance and spirit of his author He so succeeded that the great majority even of persons capable of reading the original will find it much more profitable to read his translation, itself a work of genius It has its defects and inaccuracies, but to emphasise these (as many critics have done) is not only ungenerous but unjust

A literal French translation of the 'Scienza Nuova' was published anonymously by the Princess Belgiojoso,—'La Science Nouvelle par Vico, traduite par l'auteur de l'Essai sur la formation du Dogme Catholique' Paris, 1844. It has a judicious and solid "Introduction," which is understood to have been chiefly the work of the late M Mignet. A large number of French writers have treated of Vico with insight and discrimination. M Ballanche and M H de Ferron are, perhaps, the two French authors who have

drawn most out of his works into their own systems of thought. Witness the 'Essais de Palingénesie Sociale' of the former, and the 'Theorie du Progrès' of the latter

According to Signor Marini, all that the Germans have achieved in philosophy and science during the present century is due to the inspiration of Vico If so, they have been most ungrateful to their benefactor, for they have produced only one good book regarding him—that of Dr Werner It is an excellent specimen of German thoroughness Weber's German translation of the 'Scienza Nuova,' published in 1822, is literal and unreadable Its preface is well calculated to destroy the desire of reading it.

Vico and his works have attracted little attention in Britain, and that little has been almost entirely due to the effect produced by M. Michelet's translation of the 'Scienza Nuova'

Mr Henry Nelson Coleridge, in his 'Introduction to the Study of the Greek Classic Poets,' the first edition of which was published in 1830, briefly noticed Vico's Homeric speculations (pp 33-35), and translated the third book of the 'Second New Science'—"On the Discovery of the True Homer" He himself says of the translation, "It is not literal, for who can translate this curious writer literally? But, availing myself of M Michelet's most valuable paraphrase, I believe I have given the meaning of the original with sufficient accuracy"

In the same year an article on "Vico's New Science and the Ancient Wisdom of the Italians" appeared in the 'Foreign Review,' vol. v pp 380-391. It is occupied only with his historical theories, and chiefly with those regarding Homer and the early history of Rome. It fully recognises that the leading outline of the systems both of Wolf and Niebuhr had been clearly seen and traced by Vico The most interesting portion of it is the attempt to show that on sundry important points as to which Vico and Niebuhr were at variance, truth seemed to be with the former. Its author is even inclined to endorse the hypothesis as to Etruscan

wisdom on which the 'De Sapientiâ' proceeds He says that "few writers of any age have been more philosophical in their theories or more correct in their conjectures."

The account of Vico in 'The Philological Museum,' vol ii pp 626-644, 1832, is more general in its scope.

John S Mill, in his 'Logic,' the first edition of which appeared in 1843, referred to Vico's doctrine of historical cycles—see vol ii p 509, seventh ed It would seem, however, from various particulars in his discussion of the method of the historical sciences, that he had but a slight acquaintance with his works.

In the 'Foreign Quarterly Review' for January 1845, vol xxxiv pp 289-308, there is an article entitled "Vico and the Princess Belgiojoso" It is much inferior to the article in the 'Foreign Review'

Dr Heron, in his 'History of Jurisprudence,' 1860, has "given an abstract of those portions of the New Science which treat of politics, jurisprudence, and the progress of civilisation as connected with them"

END OF VICO

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